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Middle East peace hangs in balance

Ian Black

CRUCIAL talks in London on the Middle East peace process were on the brink of collapse on Tuesday after intense, British-backed American mediation failed to bridge the gap between Israelis and Palestinians.

With each side blaming the other for the failure of the two-day London summit, Binyamin Netanyahu and Yasser Arafat both faced the prospect of an uncertain future for the historic 1993 Oslo accords.

Diplomats said that in response to the call by the United States for Israel to hand over another 13 per cent of occupied West Bank land to Palestinian rule, the Israeli prime minister had posed several new conditions, including dropping any reference to a "time out" on Jewish settlements and a Palestinian pledge not to declare a state when the deadline for an agreement on the final status of the West Bank and Gaza Strip expires next May.

Palestinians insisted the Israeli leader had never been serious about negotiating, and was seeking to buy time and avoid further concessions.

Mr Netanyahu and the Palestinian Authority president, Mr Arafat, held separate sessions with the US secretary of state, Madeleine Albright, as well as with Tony Blair, but did not meet face to face.

The British prime minister met Mr Netanyahu for talks on Tuesday morning, an hour before the Israeli prime minister had a third meeting with Mrs Albright. Downing Street played down expectations as "Blair the statesman" waded into the world's most intractable dispute. Mr Blair's talks with both Middle East leaders were never likely to produce a dramatic breakthrough. Downing Street insisted that Britain was just a "facilitator", while the US was in the "driving seat".

Mrs Albright's spokesman, James Rubin, said: "We are hoping for the best and preparing for the worst. Our optimism is not high based on the evidence that we've seen so far, but we are going to continue to work at it and we very much want these meetings to be decisive."

Such is the mistrust between the two leaders that they have not met since last October, although Jerusalem and Gaza are just an hour's drive apart.

Asked whether he might meet Mr Arafat directly, Mr Netanyahu said: "We are all here in the same town. Physically it is possible. All three of us [including Mrs Albright] have to judge the benefit of such a meeting."

Mr Blair said after his talks: "The world is concerned to see progress and a lot depends upon it. The peace process has to be got back on track, and that will require courage and good faith."

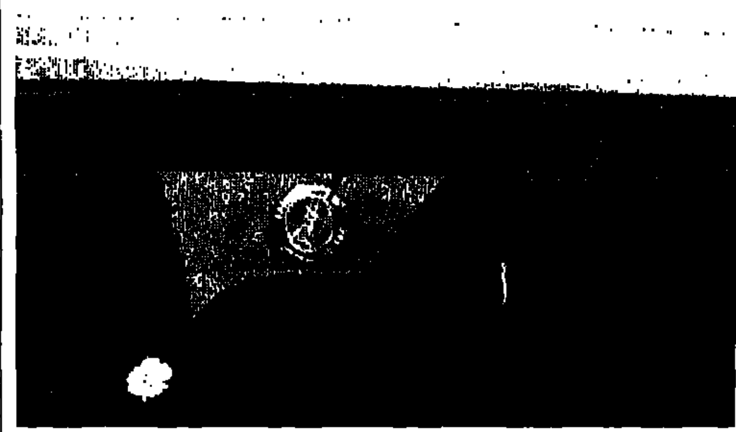
Talks between Israel and the Palestinians have been deadlocked since Mr Netanyahu's government started building a new Jewish settlement in Arab East Jerusalem in March 1997. Suicide attacks by Muslim militants deepened the crisis.

The main sticking point has been Israel's refusal to withdraw from a further 13 per cent of occupied West Bank land in the next stage of implementation of the 1993 Oslo peace accords. It has already handed back about 28 per cent. But even if agreement is reached, other issues, including Jerusalem, refugees and borders, remain.

All sides played down expectations before the meetings, but Mr Rubin said on Monday: "The gaps are significant, primarily in the area of the scope of further redeployment and the necessary security steps that have to be taken."

Earlier, Israeli officials struck a more positive tone, but insisted their security was at stake, and threatened that any unilateral Palestinian move would meet a unilateral response from them.





On the move: Madeleine Albright shuttles between meetings with Binyamin Netanyahu and Yasser Arafat in London PHOTO JONATHAN EVANS

Mr Arafat has warned that if no agreement is reached by next May he will declare an independent Palestinian state.

Of all three sides, the Palestinians were the most pessimistic, with a grim-looking Mr Arafat emerging from his talks with Mrs Albright to attack the Israeli leader for his "intransigent position".

Mr Arafat said he was committed to accepting the US proposal for a 13 per cent Israeli withdrawal — even though Palestinian rights went "far beyond" this. "Mr Netanyahu will have to bear the responsibility of the repercussions and the chaos that will ensue because of the breakdown of the peace process because of his negative attitude," he warned.

Comment, page 12

Annan 'ignored Rwanda genocide warning'

Ed Vulliamy in Washington

A DETAILED warning of impending genocide in Rwanda, three months before hundreds of thousands of Tutsis were massacred, was effectively dismissed by a United Nations office then headed by Kofi Annan, the present secretary-general, an article in the New Yorker magazine alleges.

UN peacekeepers were told not to intervene in spring 1994.

The warnings came from Major-General Romeo Dallaire, Mr Annan's commanding officer in the field. They referred not only to the planned killing of Tutsis by the Hutu junta, but also to a death threat to UN peacekeeping troops from Belgium.

Mr Annan later refused the general permission to testify before a special commission set up by the Belgian government.

Mr Annan rejected the magazine's accusations, blaming the paralysis of the UN's peacekeeping in 1994 on a lack of political will, not a lack of information.

Speaking in Nairobi on Monday, Mr Annan said he agreed with his commanding officer, who said if he had had "but one reinforced brigade — that's 5,000 men — I could have saved hundreds of thousands of lives". But he did not have the backing for peacekeepers.

The New Yorker report by Philip Gourevitch has echoes of the prior warnings about genocide in Bosnia, which were also covered up or ignored by the UN.

The magazine cites a fax sent to UN headquarters on January 11, 1994, three months before the wholesale slaughter of the Tutsis began. Gen Dallaire's warning was based on information given by a former security officer of the Hutu dictator, President Juvenal Habyarimana.

Gen Dallaire wrote to his immediate superior, General Maurice Baril, warning that his informant's registration of all Tutsis in Rwanda's capital Kigali was "for their extermination".

The informant offered to help the UN force raid Hutu militia weapons caches, and Gen Dallaire notified UN headquarters that he intended to conduct such a raid. Mr Annan's office replied that the operation could not be allowed under the mission's mandate.

The government's scheme was "to start a civil war", the informant said, during which UN troops "were to be provoked, and if Belgian soldiers resorted to force, then a number of them were to be killed".

Despite his efforts to avert the slaughter, Gen Dallaire resisted the temptation to pass the buck to UN headquarters when speaking on Canadian television last year, saying he was "intimately involved with the responsibility" for the massacres and displacement of 2 million people.

Rwanda confession, page 3

French deny Front a seat in parliament

Jon Henley in Paris

THE National Front's surprise loss last weekend of its only parliamentary seat, in its southern stronghold Toulon, was hailed as a victory for French democracy and a setback to the ambitions of the far right movement.

"This was not a victory for the Socialists, nor a victory for the united left," the Socialist party general secretary, François Hollande, said. "It was a victory for all those who really wanted to deal a blow to the National Front."

Mr Hollande said the Socialist candidate, Odette Casanova, a retired teacher who won the seat by 33 votes, had benefited in the run-off from the support of moderate rightwingers, whose candidate was eliminated in the first round.

"It's undoubtedly a heavy blow to the Front," said Jerome Lambert, a political scientist at the Sorbonne. "Many traditional rightwing supporters voted to stop them, and to express anger at the power-sharing deals struck after the regional elections. The far right is now without representation at the national level."

France's orthodox right collapsed in squabbling factions after the regional elections in March, when the National Front polled more than 15 per cent of the votes to become kingmaker in several councils.

The National Front candidate, Cendrine Le Chevallier, the local mayor's wife, had been tipped to win the byelection, called after her husband Jean-Marie was disqualified from holding a seat in the National Assembly for campaign finance irregularities. She complained of "multiple irregularities" in the vote.

Germany moves right, page 4

Austria	AS30	Malta	50c
Belgium	BF80	Netherlands	G 5
Denmark	DK17	Norway	NK 16
Finland	FM 10	Portugal	E300
France	FF 14	Saudi Arabia	SR 6.50
Germany	DM 4	Spain	P 300
Greece	DR 600	Sweden	SK 19
Italy	L 3,500	Switzerland	SF 3.80

Drawing lessons from Cambodia's tragedy

JOHN PILGER'S article on Pol Pot and Martin Woollacott's leader (April 26) both focus on the dreadful dimensions of the Cambodian tragedy, but the writers differ markedly when it comes to what lessons to draw. Pilger dwells on the role of Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger in overthrowing the neutral Sihanouk and instigating the "secret bombing campaign" of 1970-73 that was to drive the peasantry into the arms of the Khmer Rouge. Woollacott, by contrast, chastises those journalists — a reference to Pilger perhaps? — who "knew unpleasant truths but in anger at US war-making, tended to romanticise [the Khmer Rouge]". He adds that the world has since learned the truth "thanks to the work of such scholars as Ben Kiernan, David Chandler and Michael Vickers [sic]".

Has Woollacott actually read Kiernan or Vickery? In the 1980s these writers were concerned to disabuse the world of the notion that the 1979 Vietnamese intervention could be attributed to Hanoi's imperial aspirations, a view popularised in Washington and seemingly accepted by its Western allies, all of whom, with the exception of Sweden, cut off aid to Hanoi and allowed Cambodia's seat in the United Nations to be occupied by the Khmer Rouge-led coalition. The works of Kiernan, Vickery and others (including William Shawcross) show convincingly that the Khmer Rouge numbered a few hundred at most before Washington's intervention. Kiernan's analysis illuminates the devastating consequences of US bombing on traditional rural social structure in Cambodia and why rural youth flocked to join their guerrilla bands.

As Pilger has noted, and Shawcross before him, the weight of US bombs dropped on Cambodia during the "secret war" was twice as large as that dropped on Japan in 1942-45. The ultimate irony of Pol Pot's unlamented death is that the former US secretary of state, Kissinger, so instrumental in creating and then cynically sustaining the Khmer Rouge, continues to command high fees for "denigrating the truth and insulting our intelligence", as Pilger's excellent article reminds us.
G W Irvin,
The Hague, The Netherlands

CAMBODIA'S genocide began with the massive secret bombing ordered by Nixon and Kissinger. The saturation bombing, which the United States administration denied for a while, killed and maimed hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians and traumatised the Cambodian countryside, which helped galvanise the opposition to the US-backed Lon Nol regime — which in turn led to the rise of the hitherto little known Khmer Rouge.

Pilger correctly points out that "between 1969 and 1973, US bombers killed perhaps 750,000 Cambodian peasants in an attempt to destroy North Vietnamese supply bases, many of which did not exist". This figure is close to the 1 million people the Khmer Rouge killed later during their reign of terror. Justice demands the perpetrators of such a heinous crime against an innocent people be tried and punished. Nixon and Pol Pot are beyond the reach of human justice. But Kissinger is still alive and pontificating about US foreign policy.
Mahmood Elahi,
Ottawa, Canada

MARTIN Woollacott need only apply his analysis of Pol Pot to the economic abstractions contained in the present dominant paradigm, the free market, and he could contribute to preventing a global sociological disaster. Otherwise we'll just have to live through this one as well and look back in wisdom. But after all the mistakes and intellectual gutlessness of the 20th century, it would be a shame to have to go through the same thing again, and only because theory is easier than humanity.
Stephen Hay,
Geneva, Switzerland

Elusive peace in the Holy Land

I BELIEVE that in order to achieve honourable peace with the Palestinians and the rest of the Arab world, Israel must once again form a government of national unity backed by the two main parties, Likud and Labour (Middle East talks switch to London, April 26).

Twice during the 50-year history of Israel, such "grand coalition" governments have emerged to deal with the country's problems. The precedent is hence at hand, and the needs of Israel's security, prosperity, and social harmony demand it. When a nation is confronted with having to make historic decisions, its government must have the support of the vast majority of people.

In the 120-member parliament, the Binyamin Netanyahu coalition controls 61 seats, of which 23 belong to parties representing Orthodox Jews. Under the threat of toppling the government by withdrawing from the coalition these "midget" parties exercise an overwhelmingly disproportionate influence over government's policies, yet 80 per cent of Israelis are secularists or moderate religious traditionalists. Thus, the segment of Israel's population whose views regarding peace with the Arabs are best represented by the present government probably doesn't exceed 25 percent.

It is deeply troubling that with respect to the paramount issue confronting Israel, the present government does not reflect the views of the great majority of Israeli citizens.
David Queutzel,
Englewood, New Jersey, USA

AS WE reflect on the 50th birthday of the state of Israel, we should remember the hundreds of thousands of Christians and Muslims of the Holy Land who lost their homes. They have lived in refugee camps or in exile for up to 50 years. They have a human right to return to their homeland.
K J Best,
Lindfield, NSW, Australia

I FIND Robert Irwin's interpretation of the last section of George Antonius's The Arab Awakening, written in 1938, quite off the mark (Angst in the Arab world, March 22). This particular section starts with statements such as "There is no room for a second nation in a country which is already inhabited, and inhabited by a people whose national consciousness is fully awakened and whose affection for their homes and countryside is obviously unconquerable", and follows with arguments to support this statement and discussions for a practical solution to the aspirations of both communities. Rather than having Antonius's expectations confounded, as Irwin would have us believe, they were instead realised in the ethnic cleansing of Palestine following the second world war.
Dennis Prickett,
Milan, Italy

New Zealand's poor solution

AS A New Zealander I am disgusted at the hypocrisy of the call by the prime minister, Jenny Shipley, for a return to personal values (New Zealand balks at moral crusade, April 12) through the so-called Code of Responsibility.

Such calls provide no explanation as to how parents are supposed to devote enough time and care to their children if they are expected to work as a condition of receiving social welfare benefits, or, if they have a job at all, work a 10- or 12-hour day for impossibly low wages (cases of supermarket checkout operators earning NZ$1 per hour are not unknown). And when people who have never been poor preach at those who are, they merely add insult to injury.

Shipley *et al* have no right to call for more conservative moral standards in a country whose new economic order has, by legislative fiat, removed the right of trade unions to legal recognition and deliberately instituted a crude form of wage control by creating a socio-economic underclass consisting of the working poor and the permanently unemployed. It is certainly true that New Zealand was, and is, in dire economic straits, which require tough counter-measures, but the deliberate creation of poverty is no viable, long-term solution. At the end of the day you will never attract the attention of people whose rumbling stomachs are making more noise than your voice. All missionaries please take note.
G R A McMurray,
Oftersheim, Germany

Being coy about the L-word

OH WILL Hutton, why be so coy about Tony Blair's New Labour (Didn't he do well? Well, did he?, May 3)? The label he should have used to describe the party is not "British-style Christian Democrat", but British-style Liberal. The policies of Blair and Gordon Brown are remarkably similar to those of Grimmond, Pardoe and Steel. During the 1970s, when many of today's New Labour leaders were mouthing the tired slogans of state socialism, there was a "third way" advocated by Liberals. It was a mix of constitutional reform, fiscal responsibility and a more enlightened form of market capitalism. Sound familiar?

My mother, who ran a distant third as a Liberal parliamentary candidate in Manchester in 1974, would be only too happy to call herself New Labour today. To her, labels didn't really matter: policies and sound intentions did. She knew there had to be an alternative to old Labour and the Tories. Bravo for Blair. But there is still that nagging question. Why is the L-word shunned by liberal democrats here in the United States and liberal New Labour in Britain? Does the truth hurt that much?
Richard Davies,
Hastings-on-Hudson, New York, USA

Briefly

YOUR article and the accompanying photograph captured some of the elements of the Australian dockers' dispute (April 26). As a member of the Fremantle community in Western Australia and a regular on the picket line, I have been impressed by the way in which the community has backed the wharfies and the trade union movement in the fight against the Patrick Stevedores and federal government conspiracy. The fact that the federal government's popularity plummeted by 6.5 per cent in one week is an indication of how Australians regard their very partisan involvement in this dispute.
Ruth Belben,
Beaconsfield, Western Australia

YOU report strong backing in Britain for the Ulster agreement (April 19). I welcome the fact that the pollsters chose to sound out opinion beyond Northern Ireland. It is a great pity that the UK government has not sought to extend the same courtesy to its electorate as a whole, rather than allowing the forthcoming referendum to be confined to the Irish Republic and Northern Ireland. Britain has borne the cost, both in cash and lives, of trying to sustain the unsustainable — namely the refusal of Unionists to integrate with the rest of Ireland. There could have been further and faster progress if over the years the Union as a whole had dictated the agenda rather than the Ulster loyalists, whose blinkered bigotry has cast a slur on Britain's image around the world.
John Flatley,
Buenos Aires, Argentina

MARTIN Walker's article (April 5) is a brilliant exposé of the political implications of European Monetary Union, with a strong historical perspective on Germany's attempts to dominate Europe over the past 200 years. I hope that he will elaborate on the implications of economic union, which I suspect are far more sinister and far-reaching than monetary union.
Tony Booth,
Cambridge

I WAS disappointed on reading "Letter from Japan" (April 12). It is typical of a certain kind of Westerner in Japan who thinks that "we are better than them". In every industrial country there are people who see marriage as an important goal in life, and prefer to have a big, expensive wedding ceremony, traditional or otherwise. However, the article may give the impression that all Japanese women want this kind of wedding ceremony. Actually, many more women are deciding not to marry, or to have just a simple wedding party.
Azusa Sugiyama,
Yokohama, Japan

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Croatia élites set to battle over future

Ian Traynor in Bonn

CROATIA was bracing itself for a power struggle this week after the death of the defence minister, Gojko Susak, and the resignation of the head of President Franjo Tudjman's office, Hrvoje Sarinic.

The departure of two key figures in the seven-year-old state signals a battle in the ruling élite for the country's future.

President Tudjman, aged 75, has intestinal cancer, and the gloves appear to be coming off in the fight for control of his Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ), which is split between hardline nationalists who covet a slice of Bosnia and moderates keen to curb nationalist excess to gain favour with the West.

Susak's death at the age of 53 after a three-year struggle with lung cancer deprived the HDZ of its deputy leader and chief hawk. He was the leading proponent of a "Greater Croatia" policy, which envisaged dividing Bosnia between Zagreb and Belgrade, and annexing a region that includes his native town, Siroki Brijeg.

The arrival of younger and more liberal figures at the top of the HDZ could hasten the return to Croatia of deported Serbs and improve the chances of a more durable peace in Bosnia.

The unexpected resignation of Mr Sarinic suggests, however, that such prospects remain on hold. He quit after losing a battle over the fate of Dubrovacka Banka, the country's fifth biggest bank, which collapsed last month. Leading HDZ figures are widely believed to have engineered the bank's collapse.

With the opposition badly fragmented and by turn courted and then rebuffed by the ruling party, the power struggle inside the HDZ will determine Croatia's direction.

Last week's hounding of refugee Serbs and the torching of their homes in the southwestern town of Drvar, and the repeated recent dismissal of Western calls for more co-operation from Zagreb, indicate that the hardliners remain on top.

● Argentine officials have arrested Dinko Sakic, a Croatian army captain who admitted on TV that he ran a concentration camp in Croatia during the second world war where up to 600,000 Serbs, Jews and Gypsies were sent to their death.

Fighting worsens in Kosovo

Jonathan Steele in Pristina

THE sound of heavy gunfire rumbled across the fields of western Kosovo on Monday as Serbian forces continued the counter-attack launched after five policemen were ambushed and wounded by ethnic Albanian separatist guerrillas in the border village of Ponosevac.

Reporters were barred from the area, which is a few kilometres from the Albanian border, but an independent radio station in Belgrade claimed that more than 100 guerrillas were surrounded by Serbian troops.

The second day of fighting confirmed that a long strip of territory parallel to the border and on both sides of the main road from Pec to Prizren has become a second zone of heightened confrontation in the Kosovo conflict.

Until recently the main centre of tension was Drenica, about 30km from the capital, Pristina, and a long way from Albania. But the increasing flow of arms into Kosovo along isolated mountain tracks from Albania has led the Yugoslav president, Slobodan Milosevic, to send hundreds of troops and paramilitary police to the western part of the province, which is nominally part of Serbia, though most of its people are Albanian. The new Serbian deployments create extra potential targets for guerrillas of the Kosovo Liberation Army.

"We're moving towards a deeply dangerous war. These are no longer just conscripts in the army for a year," said Mahmut Bakalli, a member of the Kosovo political leadership. "The Serbs are mobilising reservists with considerable experience from fighting in Bosnia and Croatia."

Although the Yugoslav army claims that its priority is to seal the border and prevent arms smuggling, many observers fear that it is poised to strike at the scores of villages on Kosovo's western rim. Hundreds of Albanian peasants and many Serbs have fled the area in recent days.

The polarisation of the two communities is growing stronger in Pristina, where Albanians staged another protest march on Monday for the 25th consecutive day. Albanians say their Serbian neighbours no longer speak to them.

"Mistrust is growing on both sides. The change is noticeable," said a foreign official who recently returned to Kosovo after three weeks away.

Last Sunday about 200 Albanians gathered for a funeral on the outskirts of Kacannik, a town close to the southern border with no recent history of trouble. They were mourning a man shot dead after he accused an Albanian neighbour of being a collaborator. The killer, who has since fled, was a member of the Serbian police reserve and an open supporter of Mr Milosevic's Socialist Party of Serbia. He was one of the few Albanians who accept the Serbian call for political talks.

The main Albanian parties have rejected the invitation to dialogue. They say negotiations must take place with foreign mediation and be held with representatives of the Yugoslav federation, as a sign of the Albanian majority's insistence that Kosovo cannot remain in Serbia.

About 90 per cent of Kosovo's 1.8 million people are ethnic Albanians. Most want independence, peacefully if they can get it but by force if not. Belgrade has ruled the province with a heavy hand since 1989, when Mr Milosevic revoked Kosovo's autonomy.

A Cambodian child watches a government tank pull back from an attack on a Khmer Rouge stronghold. Nearly 30,000 Khmer Rouge followers have fled the country. Prince Norodom Ranariddh returned to Cambodia from exile on Monday to prepare his royalist party for elections on July 26 PHOTO: TORU YOKOTA

Suharto's soldiers run torture centre

John Aglionby in Jakarta

INDONESIAN security forces are abducting political activists and torturing them in a specially designed centre, a man who disappeared for two months this year has revealed.

Speaking in defiance of murder threats, Pius Lustrilanang, who went missing in Jakarta on February 4, told a meeting of the national human rights commission that he had been abducted at gunpoint, tortured for three days after refusing to talk, and held for eight weeks in a windowless cell measuring 6 square metres before being dumped at his parents' home.

When first questioned, Mr Lustrilanang, aged 30, who heads a group of activists supporting the government critics Amien Rais and Megawati Sukarnoputri, remained silent about his political affiliations. He was then bound, blindfolded and beaten.

"I had electric shocks applied to my feet and hands for so long they had to change the batteries, and I became so weak I told them what they wanted," he said.

He was put in an empty tub. "The tub was filled while someone held my head under the water. One man told me people entered this place alive and left it dead, so I should talk. I felt fortunate because I was not tortured badly."

Mr Lustrilanang has since left the country.

Non-governmental organisations say that at least 37 people have disappeared for various periods in the past three months, as protests against President Suharto have reached a level unprecedented in his 32 years in power. Many have been released, but more than a dozen are unaccounted for.

Mr Lustrilanang realised that other activists were in the centre when he heard their screams during torture. He discovered who they were at night when the radio was not at full volume.

There are six identical cells in the centre, which Mr Lustrilanang believes is about 30km south of Jakarta. All are covered by video cameras and brightly lit 24 hours a day. He was unable to identify his captors, but said they carried military-issue firearms and appeared to be members of the armed forces.

The human rights commissioner, Syamsuddin, a former major-general, agreed. "From my experience this sounds as if it could only be a military operation. This is probably the work of rogue elements. Nevertheless, it is the police's responsibility to find the perpetrators and bring them to justice."

As angry students demanding President Suharto's resignation clashed with police on a number of occasions, the embattled Indonesian leader stubbornly declared last week that he would not slacken his grip on power until his current term ends in five years.

As uproar continued on several campuses, he ordered the military to crush anyone trying to hasten change or undermine his regime. His stance is a slap in the face for the growing national movement of students, academics and political activists who are calling for his resignation and for reforms capable of reversing 10 months of economic meltdown. Unless Mr Suharto, who is 76 years old, steps down, they predict escalating unrest.

The Week

NIGERIA'S former deputy leader, General Oladipyo Diya, two cabinet ministers and three others were sentenced to death after being convicted of plotting to overthrow the military leader General Sani Abacha.
Washington Post, page 17

THE United Nations has appealed for $65.8 million to finance food airdrops to almost 2.5 million victims of war and drought in southern Sudan.
Comment, page 12

IRAN remained the country "most active" in sponsoring terrorism last year, according to a US state department report.
Washington Post, page 17

GENETIC tests have confirmed that remains found in Berlin more than 20 years ago are those of Hitler's private secretary, Martin Bormann, who was rumoured to have escaped to South America.

PRESIDENT Nelson Mandela named a war of liberation hero, Siphiwe Nyanda, as chief of the South African national defence force.

THE newly appointed commander of the papal Swiss Guard, Alois Estermann, his wife and another guard were found shot dead in the Vatican.

BILL CLINTON is to veto a bill approving the payment of $926 million in debts to the UN because the Senate added a condition that no money is given to international family planning organisations that support abortion rights.
Washington Post, page 17

CREDIT SUISSE bank has agreed to settle the claim of Estelle Sapir, a New York Holocaust survivor, making what her lawyer called a "historic breakthrough".

ASIA'S most reclusive leader, Kim Jong-il of North Korea, issued a lengthy letter calling for improved ties with Seoul.

RICHARD Holbrooke, the US peace envoy, blamed the Turkish Cypriot administration for the failure of the most keenly awaited Cyprus peace initiative since the division of the island 24 years ago.
Washington Post, page 18

BRAZIL promised to conserve 25 million hectares of forest in the world's biggest forest protection scheme. The World Bank and the World Wide Fund for Nature will police it.

THE Australian Peter Carey won the Commonwealth Writers Prize for his novel Jack Maggs, which was praised as an allegory of the country's growing republicanism.

Immigrants targeted in wake of far-right win

Ian Traynor in Bonn

LESS than a week after a racist party captured the biggest vote scored by any extreme rightwing movement in a post-war election, Bavarian authorities ordered the deportation of a Turkish couple who have lived in Germany for 30 years, because of the criminal record of their son, aged 13.

In the first known instance of its kind, Munich authorities gave the couple until July 21 to leave Germany with their son or face forcible deportation. The Bavarian government last month proposed new anti-foreigner measures, calling for the compulsory repatriation of immigrants whose children are found guilty of offences.

Since April 26, when the Munich-based German People's Union (DVU) netted almost 13 per cent of the vote in the eastern state of Saxony-Anhalt on an anti-foreigner platform, Bavaria's ruling Christian Social Union has been calling for a tougher campaign on law and order and immigration. The CSU hopes to undercut the extreme right.

"The DVU's election results are already showing their fatal effect," said Siegried Benker of the Bavarian Greens. "The CSU is absolutely determined to make a show as the party of deportations, exclusion and social polarisation."

The Munich Turkish family has not been named. The delinquent son, said by the authorities to represent a "massive risk to public security and order", was born in Germany. The couple's other children, two adult sons, have not been ordered to leave.

There is no known precedent for such a deportation, however, and legal experts said the law governing the rights of immigrants would need to be changed to allow it to be carried out. The Turkish couple are also likely to appeal, at the very least delaying the expulsions.

Around 30 illegal immigrants have been on hunger strike since early last week at a detention centre in the northwestern town of Büren. Human rights activists said the mood at the institution was "very tense". The hunger-strikers, mainly from Africa and India, have been detained on average for 64 days.

CSU officials said that they would keep up their tough line on immigrants to shore up their vote in state and general elections in September. They urged their sister party, Chancellor Helmut Kohl's Christian Democrats, to do likewise. Manfred Kanther, the hardline interior minister, said his stance on immigration and law and order was tough enough already.

In Saxony-Anhalt, the DVU conducted a lightning poster campaign declaring "Foreigners Out" and "German Money for Germans' Jobs".

Karl Lamers, a foreign policy adviser to Mr Kohl and his parliamentary spokesman on foreign affairs, said: "We can't ignore the fact that in certain types of crime, the foreigners' share is markedly high."

Most of Germany's more than 7 million immigrants are ranked as second-class citizens and are denied the right to vote unless they gain German citizenship — a difficult process for most. Citizenship, based on an imperial edict from 1913, is founded on blood and ethnicity.

The opposition Social Democrats, tipped to emerge as the strongest party in September's general election, have pledged to change the passport laws if they lead the next government. But there are no votes in courting the immigrant constituency, and perhaps votes to be lost by being thought to be too friendly towards foreigners.

The SPD's response is to stress that illegal employment has to be combated. Franz Munterfering, the party's election campaign manager, said restricting the black market in jobs would stem resentment at foreigners working for low pay on building sites in eastern Germany.

But it is hard to find these conditions in Saxony-Anhalt. Less than 2 per cent of the state's population are immigrants; unemployment stands at 25 per cent, yet 13 per cent voted for the racist right.



A German skinhead displays neo-Nazi insignia at a march in Leipzig attended by 6,000 far-rightwingers PHOTOGRAPH: ECKEHARD SCHULZ

Unabomber given life sentences

Christopher Reed in Los Angeles

THEODORE KACZYNSKI, the maths professor turned terrorist bomber whose 17-year anti-technology campaign killed three people and maimed more than 20, was this week given four life sentences without prospect of parole.

"The defendant committed unspeakable and monstrous crimes for which he shows utterly no remorse," Judge Garland Burrell Jr said, sentencing the former mathematician turned obsessive hermit, aged 55, who was dubbed the Unabomber.

The judge added that he feared Kaczynski would try to kill again if not closely watched.

The sentence followed extraordinary scenes in the packed courtroom in Sacramento, California, in which Kaczynski strode to the podium to denunciate the proceedings. He attacked prosecutors' "false and misleading" portrayal of him as a vengeful loner who vented a blind hatred on people he had never met, rather than the philosophical opponent of the hi-tech society he criticised in his manifesto, printed in two newspapers.

"The facts will come out later," said Kaczynski, in a hint that he is preparing another long discourse. He accused the government of "seeking to discredit me".

The wife of one of his victims had urged Judge Burrell to "lock him so far down that when he dies he will be closer to hell". Susan Mosser, whose husband Thomas, an advertising executive, was mutilated by a mail bomb at their New Jersey home, said reports of his death did not describe the nails that perforated his heart and brain, or the razor-blade fragments that ripped into his stomach.

After the hearing the Unabomber's brother, David Kaczynski, expressed his condolences "on behalf of the Kaczynski family" to the families of the three dead men.

Police snipers hid on roofs, and press and spectators, including relatives of the dead, were searched for weapons.

Kaczynski spoke calmly and expressed no emotion or remorse. He lost his attempt in January to conduct his own case. Rather than permitting his government-appointed defenders to argue that he was a paranoid schizophrenic and criminally insane, he pleaded guilty. This removed the threat of the death penalty but brought four life sentences plus 30 years in prison.

Prosecutors presented new evidence from the journals Kaczynski kept before he began his bombing campaign, which ended when FBI agents raided the isolated Montana cabin where he had lived alone for 25 years.

He wrote in 1971: "My motive for doing what I am going to do is simply personal revenge. I do not expect to accomplish anything by it. Of course, if my crime and my reasons for committing it get any public interest in the technology question, and thereby improve the chances of stopping technology, it is too late . . . I act merely from a desire for revenge."

The US prison department will decide later where Kaczynski spends the rest of his life.

Rwanda's former PM admits role in genocide

Victoria Brittain

THE former prime minister of Rwanda last week became the first person to plead guilty to charges relating to the 1994 genocide in which a million people were killed within three months.

At the United Nations' international tribunal in Arusha, Tanzania, Jean Kambanda admitted genocide, conspiracy to commit genocide, direct and public incitement to commit genocide, complicity in genocide and two charges of crimes against humanity.

Kambanda is one of the few leaders of the genocide caught on film. As well as mobilising killers in his own area of Butare, he was active in propaganda, in raising international support for the genocidal government he headed and, later, in the camps in Zaire, in planning a return to Rwanda to complete the genocide.

His admission of guilt breaks dramatically with the collective denial of the other key genocide suspects held in Arusha, who recently published a document claiming that no genocide took place.

Kambanda, one of two dozen leaders held by the tribunal, is kept apart from the other prisoners for his own safety because he was known to be preparing to co-operate with the prosecution and to give evidence against former colleagues. Other witnesses have been killed for their testimony.

The breakthrough, ahead of a visit to Rwanda by the UN secretary-general, Kofi Annan, came as another man indicted by the tribunal was arrested in Burkina Faso.

Kambanda faces a maximum sentence of life imprisonment, but the judges did not set the sentence last week. "There must be exemplary punishment by the tribunal," the official said.

Louise Arbour, the chief prosecutor for the Rwandan and Yugoslav tribunals, said Kambanda's guilty plea represented the most significant element of hope for reconciliation in Rwanda. "The guilty plea is not the result of any plea bargaining . . . There has been no agreement with respect to the appropriate sentence." She added that a plea agreement between Kambanda and the prosecution, which will not be released at this stage, contained only detailed factual admissions.

Last month the Rwandan government executed 22 people found guilty of genocide crimes. Since then there has been a flood of confessions from the 130,000 prisoners in Rwanda accused of genocide, who now want to take up the government's clemency offer.

Kambanda's plea will have an electric impact among his former associates and is also likely to affect the insurgency in the northwest. Last week 10 people were killed in Nkumba, a commune repeatedly targeted.

Rebellion in Kenya's ruling party leaves Moi isolated

Lucy Hannan in Nairobi

CORRUPTION, debt and economic stagnation in Kenya have triggered an historic rebellion in President Daniel arap Moi's party, Kanu.

The finance minister, Simeon Nyachae, told an all-party economic forum that the economy was bankrupt and high-level corruption had "run riot", creating serious financial mismanagement. He said the economy was "in tatters" and that the government could no longer afford to pay the bloated civil service.

President Moi immediately denounced the forum and its World Bank sponsors, saying there was a hidden agenda against his government.

But he is facing unprecedented defiance from Kanu's parliamentary group, which broke with a long tradition of slavish acquiescence to Mr Moi and openly supported the critical findings.

When President Moi reprimanded 82 Kanu MPs for attending the forum even some of his most notorious supporters reportedly muttered or shouted their defiance.

Mr Moi's lone stand against the forum is baffling because he had earlier called for cross-party efforts to resolve the economic crisis.

Strikes and protests against low wages and late payments have dramatically increased since Mr Moi was re-elected for a final five years in January. Teachers, bank workers, nurses and university administrators are among those who have threatened renewed action.

Sponsored by the World Bank and international donors, the economic forum was widely applauded for bringing together a cross-section of political leaders, Kanu MPs, cabinet ministers and donor representatives. It unanimously agreed to set up a committee to salvage the economy.

Since making his outspoken comments last month, Mr Nyachae has retreated from the limelight. There is now much curiosity about his fate. His post-election appointment was seen as a poisoned chalice. Forced to announce harsh and unpopular measures — including increased taxation and retrenchment — Mr Nyachae has also had to face up to the realities of a report released recently by the auditor-general. It points to massive corruption in government and particularly the office of the president.

Speculation on Mr Moi's position is now rife. The bitter succession struggle in Kanu challenges Mr Moi in a way the divided and compromised opposition has failed to do.

Imelda quits ahead of Philippine poll

Nick Cumming-Bruce in Manila

WITH tears glistening on layers of make-up, Imelda Marcos, widow of the Philippines' disgraced late dictator Ferdinand Marcos, made a characteristically theatrical exit last week from the presidential elections.

A symbol of greed, corruption and murderous repression when forced to flee with her husband from a popular revolution 12 years ago, Mrs Marcos presented herself with her customary breathtaking chutzpah as a national saviour, hounded by those in power and acting so that "true democracy will prevail".

"To save the Filipino people from the ultimate injustice of a possible bloody election, I, Imelda Romualdez Marcos, now withdraw from the May 11, 1998, presidential race," she declared. The 69-year-old widow had no chance of winning. In the last presidential election she contested, in 1992, she came fifth.

"This time she can't command the same number of votes," the university lecturer and political talk show host Randy David said.

But Mrs Marcos still commands some political as well as financial assets. She appears to be locked in behind-the-scenes bargaining with presidential hopefuls for her support. As an example of what she may be seeking, her son says the government offered to issue a pardon in return for splitting with the family an estimated $540 million held in Swiss banks.

The government says it knows nothing about such an offer.

Supporters of the present administration's hard-pressed candidate, José de Venecia, hoped that recent negotiations had tied up her backing. But analysts suspect that she will throw her weight behind the election front-runner, Joseph "Erap" Estrada, a former actor and old Marcos crony who is reported to have promised to recommend a full pardon if he wins.

A leading political scientist at the University of the Philippines, Alex Magno, describes the presidential campaign as probably the worst in the country's history. "There have been no policy debates. It's extraordinary," he said.

A major stumbling block, according to Mr Magno, is Mr Estrada, the current vice-president. The portly former movie idol and college dropout admits his knowledge of economics is minimal. His love of good food, expensive whisky and catnapping during government debates is well-known. But Mr Estrada regularly gets twice the approval rating of his rivals in opinion polls. "With Erap dominating, the campaign has turned into a farce," Mr Magno said.

The ruling party, Lakas, which backs Mr de Venecia, the former speaker of the House of Representatives, has begun a desperate search for Mr Estrada's Achilles heel. It focused first on health and fitness. Mr de Venecia took a treadmill test and challenged Mr Estrada to do so too, to prove his stamina for the post of chief executive. Mr Estrada responded by inviting Mr de Venecia to go 10 rounds with him in the ring.

Mr Magno believes a ban on the advertising of election manifestos in the campaign season — intended to benefit poorer candidates — has led to the current pantomime. It also explains why dozens of film stars, TV personalities and basketball players are running for office. Their famous names give them a greater chance of being elected than better-qualified but lesser-known candidates.

Traffic signals of disquiet

DUSHANBE DIARY
Claudia McElroy

IF THE predicament of a place can be summed up by its traffic, this is most certainly true of Tajikistan's capital — where the aftermath of one of the most violent and protracted civil wars in the former Soviet Union is visibly manifested not in physical destruction, but in the colourful pageant of vehicles on the streets.

Thundering down the main avenue come the Russian armoured combat vehicles and occasional tanks, bristling with heavy guns and stony-faced soldiers, both Russian and Tajik. Whilst providing a potent symbol of continuing Russian influence in Tajikistan, such a display also serves as an ominous reminder that the former colonial master was as much responsible for keeping the war going as it now is for keeping the peace.

Manoeuvring wildly to get out of the path of the tanks are Dushanbe's vintage taxis and minibuses — Ladas, Skodas and Volgas with sagging undercarriages and rickety wheels, almost obscured in clouds of black fumes. They have no shortage of custom, with crowds of both civilians and soldiers desperately competing for public transport.

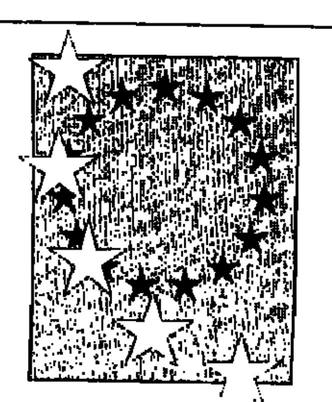
Adding to the chaos of traffic is the seemingly endless fleet of chauffeur-driven, hermetically sealed United Nations land cruisers — enough for 120 military observers as well as the numerous humanitarian aid agencies.

Finally, racing down the avenue with blatant disregard for even the most fundamental rules of the road, come the Mercedes and Pajeros with black windows, flashing lights and no licence plates. Colloquially known as "the mafia", these professional criminals have networks that control virtually every aspect of the economy. Yet their sinister aspect appears to be quietly accepted by residents of the city with a sense of either resignation or self-preserving pragmatism.

"This city has become a very dangerous place," commented a local friend, waiting for his bus home. "The level of crime has the whole of society in its grip."

It is only as night falls however, gradually emptying the streets, and the familiar refrain of gunfire picks up, that the dangers of Dushanbe come into focus.

Squabbling politicians spoil the euro's birthday



Europe this week

Martin Walker

IN A disastrous weekend of nationalist squabbling and shabby deals, the European Union's 15 shamefaced and exhausted leaders botched the birth of the new single currency, compromised its virtue and left it to face a legal challenge, the wrath of electors and the tender mercies of the markets. They could not have made a worse job of it if they had tried.

This week's Dutch general election, expected to be a placid affair that changes little, was ignited by the public humiliation of their prime minister, Wim Kok, and their former finance minister, Wim Duisenberg. After a shameless display of French nationalism, in which Paris held out for its own candidate, Mr Duisenberg is to be given a truncated four-year term as first head of the new European Central Bank, rather than the eight years required by the Maastricht treaty to demonstrate the bank's independence.

The approval of the new bank board by the European Parliament this week, intended to be a mere formality, now threatens to provoke serious clashes. British conservative MEPs vowed to bring a legal challenge against "the back-stairs deal", as a breach of the Maastricht treaty. And with rare unanimity, the leader of the socialist group in the parliament, Pauline Green, condemned "the unacceptable shenanigans" at the summit.

The 15 EU leaders met for lunch last Saturday to launch their new money, their new central bank and their new exchange rates. Eleven angry hours later, they were still at it, as the British chairman of the summit, Tony Blair, tried and largely failed to resolve the bitter row between France and Germany. By the time they finally emerged to announce their wretched deal at 1am, it had become, according to Austria's president, Viktor Klima, a classic example of "how not to organise a summit".

"It was a dogfight, one of the most difficult summits I have attended," said Germany's Chancellor Helmut Kohl as he left for home to face a re-election campaign that will see him accused of surrendering the proud Deutschmark to an enfeebled new currency born under French pressure. Instant opinion polls in Germany suggested he would lose the election, and a clear majority now wants to cling to the D-Mark.

"It makes me happy that France managed to gain an advantage," beamed the French president, Jacques Chirac. "This was important not because of nationalism but because of realism."

"Do not laugh," he snapped, as the assembled press corps guffawed. "This was not a Franco-German quarrel but a Franco-Dutch problem." The laughter redoubled. "One has to defend one's own interests — we are in a system of a Europe of nations where each nation defends its interests," he added.

And so, born in bad blood, the euro's vaunted independence from political pressure emerged deeply compromised by the howls of outrage and pain that came from its labour ward. Duisenberg, aged 62, will be the first head of the new bank, as Germany wanted. But he will step down after four years to make way for a Frenchman, as France insisted. Instead of claiming that everyone had won after the usual European summit sports of arm-twisting and last-minute compromise, the tense and tired leaders emerged from Europe's longest day still bickering.

British officials blamed the Luxembourgers for leaking the news last Saturday that a deal had been reached, only to find later that Kohl would not swallow it once he understood it. British sources also blamed the French and Germans for assuring Downing Street last month that their agreement was all sewn up. It became painfully clear last week that neither Paris nor Bonn had thought their deal through, as the markets began grumbling about the politicisation of the supposedly independent European Central Bank.

"We proposed that Sir Nigel Wickes [chairman of the EU monetary committee] make the rounds of Europe to ensure that the ground was properly prepared," a senior British official told the Guardian, as Downing Street refused to accept any blame for the mess. "Both Paris and Bonn insisted there was no need. They were wrong."

"There has been no fudge or fix," protested Blair, to laughter from the assembled Euro-press. "I am proud we have been able to get this agreement through while maintaining entirely the sanctity of the treaty."

At one point in the long night, Chirac suggested that Britain should join the euro forthwith, and then they could all agree on a British head of the central bank. Blair gave a wintry smile, while fending off the complaints of the smaller countries as the British, French, German and Dutch leaders kept retreating into their huddle.

The European Commission president Jacques Santer said wryly: "This is an historic day, in spite of everything." But after 2,600 frustrated and increasingly hungry journalists waited for the 11-hour session to reach agreement, the scale of the row could not be disguised. Europe now has a currency and a central bank whose enfeebled credibility will require even tougher monetary management.

Financiers and currency traders could hardly believe their eyes, after all the proud boasts that the new currency would account for a quarter of world output and world trade, and would instantly rival the dollar. Above all, the Maastricht treaty's insistence that the new currency be run by a sober and politically independent board of central bankers collapsed before the reality of a euro that was launched as a pawn of nationalist politics.

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Starr turns up heat on Clinton

WASHINGTON DIARY
Martin Kettle

KENNETH Starr's long awaited endgame against Bill Clinton has begun, and the confidence that had begun to permeate the administration about its ability to withstand the threats it still faces from the independent counsel has begun to look just a little like complacency.

If any one event symbolised this latest turn in a remarkable political year, it was the decision last week by Clinton and his advisers to hold a presidential news conference in the White House.

Clinton and his team have avoided ordeal by press corps at every turn since the Monica Lewinsky crisis broke in mid-January. Only twice in this time has the president been exposed to the kind of wide-ranging media questioning that he normally relishes, and both occasions — the joint assault during Tony Blair's visit to Washington in February and a double act with Nelson Mandela in Cape Town in March — were unavoidable.

Otherwise, Clinton has lain low, and has seen his popularity ratings soar: the latest poll put his approval rate at a very healthy 63 per cent. Last week, however, the president's itch to talk became too strong to resist, and the White House decided that a press conference was a risk worth taking. Clinton and his advisers had three good reasons for their confidence: the sex scandals had died down, there were sensationally good economic figures to announce, and there was the opportunity to give a final push to the expected Senate approval of Nato expansion.

In its eagerness the administration forgot one of the lessons that it has been most fond of pointing out during these embattled weeks — few off-the-record conversations with White House advisers take place without a denunciation of Starr and his deputy, Hickman Ewing, for their tactics, especially their selective leaking to the press. So the White House ought not to have been surprised when, hours after the press conference was announced, it became known that a District of Columbia federal judge had ruled that Lewinsky had no immunity deal with Starr (as her lawyer had claimed) and that she would therefore have to give evidence to Starr's DC grand jury.

The news thrust Lewinsky, who has also begun to enjoy a lower profile, back into the headlines. As a result, Clinton's press conference became more of an ordeal than he would have hoped. The event also served as a reminder that the former White House intern retains the capacity to knock the president off course and even, if mishandled, to bring him down.

As an event, the press conference was far from disastrous for Clinton. The economic news he was able to announce — a 4.2 per cent year-on-year growth rate for the first quarter of 1998 combined with the lowest unemployment and inflation rates in nearly three decades — underscored exactly why he is such a survivor. Nor was he caught out by the many Lewinsky and Starr related questions, which took up about half of the hour-long session.

But the press conference was an indication that events are beginning to put a tighter squeeze on Clinton after his strong recovery in March and April. The months of May and June could be tougher.

FIRST, there is the prospect that Lewinsky will return to embarrass him — or worse. In this scenario it is not so much Lewinsky's evidence about her alleged affair with the president that will be damaging, though it won't help. The real danger to Clinton is if Lewinsky is indicted for perjury. If that happens — and last week's leaked ruling makes it quite likely — public opinion will switch from regarding Lewinsky as silly to regarding her as Clinton's fall-gal.

Second, Starr's attention has switched back to the Whitewater aspects of his investigation. Last week Starr formally indicted Hillary Clinton's former law partner and Clinton's old friend Webster Hubbell, as well as his wife Suzy, on 10 tax evasion and fraud charges. The move was widely seen both as another attempt to squeeze the Hubbells to implicate the Clintons in the Whitewater inquiry and as a ploy to lever further information on Starr's suspicion that Hubbell has been paid hush money to cover up for the First Couple.

Politically, Clinton has already survived Whitewater. But the urgency in Starr's fresh Whitewater investigation causes trouble for the president none the less. The immediate reason for the urgency is that the permitted time-span for Starr's Arkansas grand jury to hear evidence on the Whitewater investigation runs out this month. As a result, Starr has been turning up the heat — charging Hubbell, re-interviewing Hillary Clinton for five hours last month, and trying once more to get another former Arkansas friend of the Clintons, Susan McDougall, to give evidence against them. (McDougall is in jail in California for refusing to do so, and has a case for being seen as a political prisoner.)

Desperate stuff, the Clinton side says. Proof that Starr is out of control. Evidence that he and Ewing are fanatics. All of which may be true. But it does not follow that people think the better of the Clintons. The Hubbells were their very close friends. They may be determined, like McDougall, to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with the Clintons against Starr. But the fact remains that Hubbell is a convicted embezzler (for which he served a 21-month sentence) and he is now accused of evading nearly $900,000 in income taxes and related penalties while continuing to live extremely comfortably.

That does not land the president in the dock or in prison. But it makes him more vulnerable politically. This is why recent days have seen a fascinating and potentially significant revitalisation of the personal attacks on Clinton by the House Speaker, Newt Gingrich, who has hitherto preferred to stay quiet and see how the crisis develops.

Reviving last year's big Republican issue of campaign fund-raising abuse, Gingrich said: "This is not about sex. This is not about gossip. This is not about soap operas. This is about lawbreaking."

Clinton will not end up in jail. Nor will he lose the presidency before he retires in January 2001. But his ability to command the political field in the interim depends on his escape from being a damaged leader, isolated in the White House by an unforgiving Congress controlled by his enemies. Between them, Starr and Gingrich are doing their best to prevent that happening.

Macau mobsters spit contempt

Andrew Higgins in Macau

WEARING a black shirt, black trousers and a black jacket, Broken Tooth Koi ambled into Courtroom No 4, oddly relaxed for a man summoned to face the majesty and might of the law. He was there for less than 10 minutes — just long enough for a Portuguese judge to record the absence of seven witnesses. All had pleaded acute and very sudden illness.

The court adjourned, postponing for a further two months judgment on whether Macau's most feared "businessman" should go to jail for flouting the gambling laws.

The case had been billed as a showdown between the rising star of Asian crime and the expiring power of Europe's oldest enclave in China. But it fizzled into a shambolic no-show.

"The gangs are laughing at us. They think nothing can happen to them any more," said Rui Afonso, a lawyer and former head of the security commission in Macau's legislature. "I think the government has given up. They have only a few months to go and just want to get out of here safely."

Getting out alive before China takes over in December next year is no longer a modest ambition.

In the past six weeks, six people have died in execution-style killings. Three worked for the Portuguese administration, including a senior official in the gambling inspectorate, the agency that launched the case against Broken Tooth, and the chauffeur of Brigadier Manuel Monge, the enclave's most senior crime-fighter.

Adding to the jitters are gothic tales of intimidation. According to a local tabloid, Brig Monge received a gift-wrapped live snake shortly before the murder of his driver. The snake's tail had been sliced in two — a traditional triad death threat. The authorities deny the story.

"All this would give the idea that Macau is the Casablanca of the Far East," said Colonel Manuel Geraldes, a senior security adviser. "We don't accept that." But he does acknowledge the fear that keeps witnesses silent and suspected gangsters out of jail. "Everybody knows everything but as soon as something happens nobody knows anything."

Mobsters have long been as much a part of Macau as its casinos. Gambling generates more than $2 billion in legal profits a year and feeds an unruly underground menagerie of loan sharks, pimps, prostitutes and enforcers. Outside this world, though, crime used to be rare. But instead of merely mauling one another, feuding triads have turned their wrath on the government.

Francisco Xavier Pinto do Amaral, a senior gambling inspector, was shot dead at point blank range as he walked to lunch. Brig Monge's driver was murdered on the eve of a recent visit by the Portuguese prime minister.

No one in Macau bristles with more cocky contempt for authority than Wan Kuok-koi, or Broken Tooth. He describes himself as a charity fund-raiser and businessman but is better known as the head of Macau's 14K triad, a secret society with branches around the world.

"We are just like the state. If you disrespect the state you get hit," he told the Guardian. "If you disrespect the family, you get hit, too." He spits contempt for the Portuguese authorities, whom he accuses of hounding him unfairly.

With some 10,000 14K foot-soldiers allegedly at his disposal, he commands more muscle than the police force, which has yet to solve any of the 34 execution-style murders since the beginning of last year.

De Gaulle's image takes a beating

Paul Webster in Paris

CHARLES de Gaulle's image has taken a knock with the publication of an insider's diaries revealing a bloodthirsty, petty politician who wanted some of the May 1968 student protesters shot dead and dismissed African leaders as "very boring".

The 790 pages might have been dismissed as vengeful sensationalism had they not been written by Jacques Foccart, the official at the centre of Gaullist secret strategy in France and Africa. Foccart, a former resistance colonel who had to report to the president daily, decided to publish his notes just before he died last year. Le Général en Mai, published last week, covers 1968 and 1969, De Gaulle's last two years as president.

A sequence of verbatim accounts of presidential decisions confirms De Gaulle's hesitancy and irresolution during the 1968 student rebellion.

Once the rioting was over, the general believed that more force should have been used. The interior minister, Christian Fouchet, accused of holding back the riot police during the revolt, told De Gaulle that tougher action would have left at least 15 dead and the rebellion would have worsened.

According to Foccart, De Gaulle replied: "There might have been a longer period of jumpiness but the situation would have been clearer."

Pettiness and petulance emerge from every page of Foccart's disclosures. Every Gaullist official was chosen personally by the president, who Foccart says intervened repeatedly to obtain jobs for some of his relatives and was involved in dubious financial transactions.

Perhaps the most surprising revelation is of the general's disdain for African leaders, with whom Foccart was the main link. In 1968 De Gaulle told Foccart to ban *les nègres* from the presidential palace for at least two months. "It's not so much the time they take up, even though that is very boring, but because it has a bad effect outside," Foccart was told. "No one wants to see *nègres* every day at the Elysée."

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Home Office probe into Bell book deal

Luke Harding

JACK STRAW, the Home Secretary, ordered an inquiry into the Mary Bell book row last week after it emerged that his officials had known about the project for more than two years but had failed to tell him.

Announcing an investigation into what lessons could be learned, Mr Straw said it was "deeply regrettable" that Bell should have been paid to collaborate on the book, Cries Unheard. His action followed a meeting with June Richardson, whose four-year-old son was killed by Bell in 1968.

Bell and her 14-year-old daughter were last week at a secret address as tabloid reporters besieged their seaside home. Her daughter only discovered her mother's true identity when their house was surrounded by the press.

Mr Straw said he shared Mrs Richardson's "anger and frustration that money was being made out of the circumstances of her son's death and that of Brian Howe [Bell's second victim]".

The Home Secretary found out about the payment only late last month. "Following reports that Home Office officials have known about this contract for some time, we have discovered that Durham Probation Service and Home Office officials were aware of the possibility of a book about Mary Bell in early 1996," he said.

"I deeply regret that ministers were not informed and were unable to intervene."

He described the affair as a "sorry episode". He added: "It is equally regrettable that Mary Bell's daughter should suffer because of the irresponsible actions of others" — an oblique swipe at the book's author, Gitta Sereny, its publisher Macmillan, and the tabloid papers which have relentlessly pursued her.

Bell, who was released on licence in 1980, having served 12 years in prison, is still being supervised by the probation service.

The Official Solicitor has been examining ways of strengthening the 1984 injunction which prevents Bell's teenage daughter from being identified. He is also considering contempt of court action against several tabloid newspapers.

Alan Levy QC, a specialist in child law, said there was a prima facie case that interviews with, and photographs of, Mary Bell's partner had broken the injunction. Lawyers may now seek a fresh clause preventing newspapers from approaching the family.

The Press Complaints Commission said it was investigating complaints about the Times's serialisation of Cries Unheard. The Times paid around £35,000 to Macmillan, it has emerged. It was not clear whether any of the money was passed on, directly or indirectly, to Bell in breach of the commission's code.

The PCC director, Lord Wakeham, said he could take action over the harassment of Bell only if she or her family complained.

But David Banks, information director of Mirror Group Newspapers, shrugged off the criticism. "Mary Bell was the first to violate the injunction, if there has been a violation," he said.

In Newcastle, where Bell was tried, W H Smith said it would not stock the book. Waterstone's followed suit, but said customers could order copies.

Meanwhile the secure unit where Bell was sent after her conviction at the age of 11 is under investigation after allegations that she was a victim of systematic sexual abuse.

Merseyside police last week confirmed that they are investigating Red Bank Special Unit, where Bell was sent in 1968, as part of a massive inquiry into institutional child abuse dating back more than 30 years. Bell, who was the only girl at the approved school, was subjected to repeated attacks by one member of staff, a former inmate said. "She was petrified" he said.

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'Victim of abuse' loses murder appeal

Amelia Gentleman

THE Court of Appeal last week dismissed an appeal by Zoora Shah against her conviction for the murder of a man whom she alleged subjected her to years of abuse.

There were cries of "no" from her children in the public gallery as the decision was announced.

Shah, a mother of three from Bradford whose husband abandoned her before the birth of their third child, pleaded not guilty to murder at Leeds crown court in 1993. But at her appeal she admitted twice poisoning Mohammed Azam, aged 47, with arsenic, saying she was so depressed she was not responsible for her actions.

Her counsel, Edward Fitzgerald QC, told Lord Justice Kennedy, sitting with Mr Justice Butterfield and Mr Justice Richards, that Shah's conviction was unsafe due to her diminished responsibility: Shah, an illiterate from rural Pakistan who came to Britain for an arranged marriage in the 1970s, had not told the full story of her treatment by Azam, a drug dealer, because she did not want to bring shame on her family.

But Lord Justice Kennedy said he found Shah's evidence not capable of belief. "By her own admission she has lied repeatedly in the past, and we are far from satisfied that she has ceased to do so."

During the appeal, Shah, in her mid-40s, told how she had agreed to have sex with Azam, in return for his finding her a home after her husband left. In 1982 he asked her to bring drugs from Pakistan when she visited her family, she alleged. When she came back empty-handed he was violently abusive.

Azam was jailed for drugs offences in 1984, but after his release the abuse continued. At one stage she tried to hire a hitman.

She resolved to act herself when Azam took a sexual interest in her two teenage daughters. Shah acquired arsenic, in green powder form, in Pakistan and laced a samosa — aiming to diminish his sex drive, she said. He was ill for a month. Later she spiked a gagrella — an Indian sweet — with a teaspoon of poison, knowing it could be fatal, and gave it to him. He died the next day.

Though "plainly at times anxious, undernourished and depressed", she was a strong-willed woman who "conspired to commit forgery, hired a hit man and, when double-crossed, made allegations of rape and theft which she now admits to be false", the judgment said. Permission to appeal to the House of Lords was refused.

Shah's eldest daughter, Naseem, aged 24, said outside court: "She was just a mother who was looking out for her kids and doing as best she could. We're devastated."

Vigilante attacks threaten sex offenders' supervision

Alan Travis

THE first signs of the breakdown of the system of supervision of sex offenders emerged last week, as ministers admitted the wave of vigilante attacks has forced a growing number of probation hostels to close their doors to paedophiles.

Probation chiefs said at least 10 probation and bail hostels now refuse to accept sex offenders who have been released from prison because they fear attacks from local residents. The problem is believed recently to have got worse since the violent protests surrounding the release of child killers Robert Oliver and Sidney Cooke.

The refusal by some hostels to take any sex offenders means others have a high proportion among their residents. But even that is now being put in jeopardy as many more of the 101 probation hostels around Britain are now also refusing to take sex offenders from outside their own immediate area.

"They don't want to become dumping grounds for the rest of their region," said Gill Mackenzie, vice-chair of the Association of Chief Officers of Probation. Ministers fear it will become "difficult if not impossible to place these people".

Details of more than 40 incidents of "outing" of sex offenders by local newspapers and vigilante protests and attacks have been released by chief probation officers. In one case, police had to evacuate residents and staff from a hostel when it was surrounded by a crowd of 400 people angry about a sex offender, who in fact was not there.

The developments are the first indications of the breakdown of the entire system of supervision of sex offenders which chief probation officers describe as the "the front line of public protection".

Graham Smith, Chief Inspector of Probation, said that hostel managers were refusing to take sex offenders "not because they can't handle or cope with them, but because of the consequences from the local community doing something very stupid to the hostel and the staff there".

He said that local residents who attacked or picketed probation hostels to protect their children were achieving the opposite, as sex offenders could not be closely monitored if they were living alone outside the hostels.

The disclosure of the impact of the vigilante movement coincided with publication of a new study by the Chief Inspector of Probation, which concludes that the probation service's supervision of sex offenders is highly effective.

It found that 93 per cent of sex offenders kept in hostels were not reconvicted — among the highest rate for any group of criminals. The Chief Inspector says in his study, the first in this area for seven years, that the quality of work undertaken by the probation service with sex offenders was testimony to their skills and persistence. The inspectors found a high level of vigilance and the treatment programmes used were designed to protect the public.

The Home Office Minister, Joyce Quin, said the report showed the probation service was playing a vital role. "If sex offenders are not able to be accommodated in this way, we are in fact increasing the danger to the public by driving them from where they can be supervised, to a life underground."

Ban animal abusers for life, says MP

James Meikle

CRUELTY to animals reached alarming levels last year, with 23 per cent more people prosecuted than in 1996, and a 16 per cent rise in convictions, the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals said last week.

Dogs, cats, horses and donkeys suffered most, but there was also a near doubling in cruelty to wildlife.

The society launched prosecutions involving 1,195 people, and obtained 2,650 convictions. Fifty-seven people received prison sentences and 795 were banned from keeping animals.

The society has begun training programmes for magistrates to make them more aware of their powers to disqualify people from keeping animals. These powers were not used against 261 people last year.

Roger Gale, Tory MP for Thanet North and chairman of the parliamentary welfare group, said those cruel to animals should face a life ban on owning them.

"There are still courts not prepared to throw the book at the perpetrators and ban them from owning animals — for life if necessary. For the kind of people we are talking about, a fine and costs is likely to prove no deterrent."

Penalties imposed last year included 120 hours' community service for a 16-year-old Norfolk boy convicted of mutilating a hedgehog. A Kent farmer received a six-month suspended prison sentence and was banned from keeping animals for a year for cruelty to pigs, and a decorator was banned from keeping pets for life after nearly beating his puppy to death.

The society said there was a call to its cruelty hotline every 22 seconds from people reporting emergencies. Other work included rescuing 8,255 animals from danger and collecting nearly 170,000 unwanted, sick or injured animals.

Richard Davies, head of the society's inspectorate, said: "Looking after an animal involves care, cost and commitment, and people should not take on pets if these essential requirements are not met."

In Brief

RONALD and Edgar Pearce, two brothers in their 60s, have been charged in connection with the Mardi Gra bombings which have targeted Barclays Bank and Sainsbury's supermarkets for the past four years.

PREGNANT women have been advised not to have their teeth filled with the usual amalgam because of an outside chance that the foetus might be exposed to mercury fumes.

A VACCINE to prevent tooth decay has been developed by scientists at Guy's hospital in London after 25 years' research.

FOUR Slovak Gypsy families, part of an influx of refugees who arrived in Dover last year claiming asylum, won a test case allowing them to stay in Britain.

THE Scottish Environment Protection Agency is to take legal action to curb radioactive pollution levels at the Dounreay nuclear power plant.

THE Countryside Alliance, which brought 250,000 people to London in March, is being investigated for breaches of the data protection legislation after its membership list was passed to the Conservative party.

THE rocky history of the Independent newspaper took another twist last week as the editor-in-chief, Andrew Marr, resigned after the appointment of Simon Kelner as editor.

KENT police made the first move of a possible crackdown on football hooligans ahead of the World Cup. Twelve men were arrested in connection with the violence last month when a Fulham fan was killed after a match against Gillingham.

A ROMAN Catholic priest, Eric Taylor, who sexually abused young boys in a Warwickshire orphanage and stood by while they were beaten by nuns for complaining about him, was jailed for seven years.

PARLIAMENT is to have access to accounts for the royal palaces, the Queen's flight and the Royal Train.

THE Mitchells, a British family of three who were kidnapped in the Yemen last month, have been freed.

A MAN, named as George Mereah, who tried to sell Mohamed Al Fayed evidence that the Princess of Wales and his son Dodi were murdered has been arrested after allegedly demanding £10 million.

THE actor Kevin Lloyd has died aged 49 after a long and losing battle with alcohol.

Firm broke UN weapons ban

Guardian Reporters

A BRITISH mercenary company at the heart of a criminal investigation into the use of weapons to overthrow a military junta in the West African state of Sierra Leone claimed last weekend that the deal — which broke a United Nations arms embargo — was sanctioned by the Government.

A statement issued by Lieutenant-Colonel Tim Spicer, head of Sandline International, challenged the Foreign Office to give a full account of the Government's involvement in the operation to restore the elected president of the former British colony.

"Sandline . . . still believe, that we were acting with the approval of Her Majesty's Government in assisting to restore President [Ahmed Tejan] Kabbah, who had been overthrown last year in an unlawful coup by a military junta, and have been advised that accordingly no offence had been committed," it said.

With echoes of the arms-for-Iraq affair ringing in their ears, Foreign Office ministers insisted they had not approved arms shipments in breach of a United Nations embargo — though the UN backed the restoration of the democratically elected president.

A full-scale criminal investigation is under way by Customs and Excise, helped by officials from the Department of Trade and Industry. But the Foreign Office categorically denied "ministerial involvement" in the affair.

The Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, promised full and open cooperation with the investigation. "I do not want any suggestion of cover-up," he said. "Our own investigation quite clearly shows that there was no ministerial approval for any activity by Sandline, no contact by ministers with Sandline, no discussion by ministers with Sandline, and we will robustly resist any claim that there was."

Tony Lloyd, the Foreign Office minister directly responsible, said: "There was no ministerial involvement or approval, and obviously that is why this inquiry has to take its natural course."

Charges centre on allegations that UN sanctions were broken by a shipment of Bulgarian small arms to Sierra Leone. Sandline alleges it had meetings with Foreign Office and Ministry of Defence officials. Peter Penfold, the High Commissioner to Sierra Leone, has been called back to Britain to be questioned by Customs investigators.

Security sources suggested that a formal memorandum of understanding was signed about 18 months ago between Sandline and the Conservative government. The agreement allegedly permitted Sandline to lend assistance to President Kabbah's forces, who were then in control of the country but facing rebel attacks.

The UN imposed sanctions on Sierra Leone last October after President Kabbah, the country's democratically elected leader, was ousted and exiled in a May 1997 coup led by Lieutenant-Colonel Johnny Paul Koroma. Mr Kabbah was returned to power in March after a Nigerian-led force ousted the coup leaders. Britain had made no secret of its wish to restore Sierra Leone's elected government.

A fugitive Indian financier with links to the Saudi arms dealer Adnan Khashoggi has emerged as a key figure in the scandal.

Rakesh Saxena, who is being held in Canada, is alleged to have helped finance the deal.

Mr Saxena, who has mining interests in Sierra Leone, was arrested by Canadian police in July 1996 on a Thai extradition warrant. The Bangkok authorities charged him with money-laundering offences unrelated to West Africa. Mr Saxena, former treasurer adviser at the Bangkok Bank of Commerce, allegedly embezzled $88 million.

According to the newsletter Africa Confidential, Mr Saxena paid Sandline $1.5 million as a first instalment for the supply of arms to Sierra Leone militias supporting the ousted president.

While on bail in Canada, Mr Saxena apparently continued arranging the counter-coup. According to the Vancouver Sun, Col Spicer wrote to Mr Saxena: "You have asked for assistance with a military appreciation of the credible options of the [exiled Kabbah]. We are certainly able to assist . . . As you are aware, we have unique expertise and knowledge of the country."

War victims on Internet

Richard Norton-Taylor

THE Government has published on the Internet the names of 25,000 owners of bank accounts seized during the war, in a move paving the way toward repayment of millions of pounds worth of assets to victims of Nazi prosecution.

The assets were confiscated under "trading with the enemy" regulations which made no distinction between Germans, citizens of Nazi puppet regimes or Nazi-occupied countries, and Jews.

Up to 10 per cent of the names, which include companies as well as individuals, are believed to be Jews and other victims of the Nazis, living at the time in Germany, Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania. The names also include Japanese residents with assets invested in Britain.

The Government agreed to repay the assets of Nazi victims despite post-war peace treaties with central and eastern European countries which officially settled the issue of compensation. In the event, Jews and other minority groups were ignored by the post-war communist regimes there.

The Government agreed to set up a claims procedure and an initial £2 million fund for Nazi victims whose assets were seized in Britain, after pressure from the World Jewish Congress and the London-based Holocaust Educational Trust.

The names are on the Internet at www.enemyproperty.gov.uk.

Mayor to have 'real power'

Lucy Patton

TONY BLAIR last week urged Londoners to back plans for their own directly-elected mayor and assembly and promised the job of mayor would be "a post that is going to have power, real power".

Speaking before a debate at London's Guildhall, the Prime Minister said: "There is no question that the mayor will have the power to change things for the better. On transport, crime, jobs and the environment the mayor will have the power to make a difference and will be expected by Londoners to do so."

Mr Blair urged that the debate about personalities — speculation about who will be mayor has dominated coverage so far — be left until after Londoners had voted on May 7 in a referendum to put in place the new government for the capital.

In his speech, Mr Blair outlined his personal experience of living in London and joked that he was sorry he had made the name of Islington "a term of abuse" in the media — as critics of New Labour often speak dismissively of the Islington set.

He urged Londoners to back the Government's proposals, which he said meant London could be "the best city in the world". He disclosed that the mayor would be able to appoint a powerful new transport authority, called Transport for London, to oversee all forms of travel in the city. London will also have a new police authority.

In the debate Labour MP Ken Livingstone, former leader of the Greater London Council, which was abolished by the Conservatives in 1986, said he shared concerns about the power of the mayor. He would prefer a system like that in Paris where the mayor was elected by the council.

In a poll by the London Evening Standard, 66 per cent of people said they would be ready to back Virgin boss Richard Branson as mayor. But Mr Branson said it was "very unlikely" that he would run.

The assembly is planned to be up and running in 2000.

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Schools inspector in funding row

John Carvel

EDUCATION Secretary David Blunkett's attempt to extract billions of pounds of extra money for education from the Treasury's comprehensive spending review was undermined last week by Chris Woodhead, head of the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted).

Mr Woodhead said there was "no inspection evidence to suggest that schools as a whole are underfunded to do the job".

A tenth of primary schools and a quarter of secondaries did not have enough books and resources to deliver the national curriculum, but this was the result of mismanagement and unfair distribution of resources.

"What matters ultimately is how teachers teach: not the quantity or sophistication of the resources they can employ or the modernity of the buildings in which they work," he told the rightwing think-tank Politeia.

Mr Blunkett refused to discipline Mr Woodhead despite calls for the latter's resignation from teacher union leaders.

Nigel de Gruchy, general secretary of the National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers, said the remark was a "financial stab in the back" for Mr Blunkett during negotiations with the Treasury to get a better deal for education in the Government's comprehensive spending review.

"David Blunkett has said that he cannot deliver on the Government's education policies without more resources," he said. "Chris Woodhead has now put himself fundamentally at odds with David Blunkett's position. Can they both remain in their current positions?"

But Mr Blunkett said there was no cause to reprimand Mr Woodhead. "I have no difficulty with what he said. Being misinterpreted does not warrant an apology . . . Of course, I don't expect him to resign, he is perfectly entitled to his views."

Mr Woodhead acknowledged that he was in danger of trespassing on political territory. But he said he could not "bottle out altogether" from discussing resources. New funding would help to repair buildings and allow schools to update IT equipment, cut class sizes and buy extra books.

"But we have to recognise that there is much that all of us within the world of education, from the Secretary of State down, can and must do to put our own house in order — which means thinking very hard about both funding and teaching mechanisms," he added.

Mr Blunkett had hoped to be a main beneficiary of the Whitehall spending review, which is setting priorities for the final three years of Labour's first term.

However, arguments about how far the £37 billion education budget should be increased have not been resolved and the Government is not expected to announce its decisions until July. In these circumstances, Mr Woodhead's intervention may be regarded as distinctly unhelpful.

Meanwhile the National Audit Office confirmed that it has been urged by officials from the Department for Education and Employment to inquire whether Ofsted is providing value for money from its annual budget of £120 million.

A spokesman for Ofsted said it was "likely" that the organisation would face a value-for-money investigation at some point.



Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye, printed by William Caxton in 1474 PHOTOGRAPH: GRAHAM TURNER

Canterbury Tales comes under the hammer

A FIRST edition of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales, the last in private hands and one of only a dozen to survive, is to be sold at a Christie's auction in July, *writes Maev Kennedy*.

"You can't set a price for this Chaucer," said Felix de Marez Oyens, director of Christie's books collection, "nothing like it has come up this century."

The book has been in the same family since they bought it for £6, at Christie's in 1776. It is now estimated to be worth up to £700,000.

Printed by William Caxton in 1477 at his workshop at Westminster Abbey, it was rebound in the 18th century for the library of the great Oxford scholar John Radcliffe.

It will be sold with works of art, including a magnificent Van Dyck, furniture and silver, and an equally rare book — the first printed in English by William Caxton at Bruges in 1474, which is still in its 15th century binding. This book is less valuable because the text, Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye, is less coveted by collectors.

Treating Mr Hyde with disdain

PARLIAMENTARY SKETCH
Simon Hoggart

THE Prime Minister's press secretary, Alastair Campbell, came under genteel attack in the House of Lords last week.

As the great columnist Molly Ivins of Austin, Texas, said when she became an object of hatred and ridicule for the far-right radio host Rush Limbaugh, "it's like being gummed to death by a newt."

The question about Mr Campbell had been asked by Lord Peyton of Yeovil, who as John Peyton used to be transport minister roughly at the time when the big transport issue was whether stage coaches could use smart cards to pay their turnpike tolls. Would the Government, he asked, define the role of the press secretary?

This was courteous code for "Why does this whipper-snapper Campbell think he can send rude faxes to ministers telling them what to do — it would never have happened in my day?"

Lord McIntosh, for the Government, said stolidly that Mr Campbell existed to give out the essential messages, the key themes, and to sustain and co-ordinate these across government — whatever that meant.

Lord Peyton asked whether his real job was to stop Tony Blair from getting involved in unpleasantness — "to play Mr Hyde to the Prime Minister's Dr Jekyll?"

This was perfectly correct. As Tony Blair ought to say, "I myself abhor any unpleasantness, Mr Bond, but I regret that my associate Mr Campbell is less fastidious . . ."

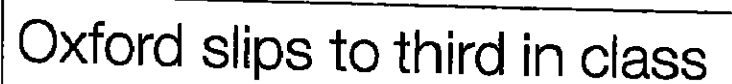
Labour peers, who don't like Alastair Campbell much either, but hope in some cases to be ministers themselves, opted for galumphing comedy. Lord Janner asked whether Lord McIntosh would have a word with Sir Bernard Ingham — Margaret Thatcher's old press secretary — and ask him "how he could run his office in a more reticent and self-effacing way". (House of Lords irony tends to be splattered on with a paint roller.)

Lord McIntosh moved into hypersarcasm. Bernard Ingham had been a civil servant. He had always refrained from any activities which could possibly be called party political, and had certainly never made any statements which reflected on the quality of ministers in the Thatcher government.

This was a reference to John Biffen, who Sir Bernard once famously called "a semi-detached member of the government". Now, as Lord Biffen, he sat on the Tory benches looking fully detached, indeed utterly uninterested. He resembled what estate agents describe as "ready for vacant possession".

Lord Strathclyde, a Tory frontbencher, wondered whether Mr Campbell's rude faxes to Harriet Harman and Frank Field had been cleared with the Prime Minister. Lord McIntosh said that he did not deny the importance of Alastair Campbell — "it is more than my job is worth to do so. As for his faxes to ministers, they were made with the full authority of the Prime Minister."

The peers gasped — or would have gasped if they were hale enough to do anything so energetic. Instead they expressed their astonishment with a deep, sad, subterranean sigh, as if 80 of them had all died at once.



Oxford slips to third in class

THE self-confidence of Oxford university — built up over seven centuries as one of the world's great academic institutions — was undimmed last week despite evidence that it was slipping down Britain's higher education league, *writes John Carvel*.

It came third in the overall rankings, behind its old rival Cambridge and London university's Imperial College. On quality of teaching, it was also beaten by York and Warwick.

The league tables were compiled by the Financial Times to rank 97 universities by 16 performance indicators. Oxford scored 75.25 points out of a possible 100, while Cambridge got 78.44 and Imperial got 77.48. All the universities which converted from polytechnic status in 1992 scored below 45.

Cambridge came top in five categories — entrance standards, quality of both research and teaching, the proportion of undergraduates getting first-class degrees and the proportion doing postgraduate research. Oxford's only first was for the amount per student spent on libraries.

The university's official position last week was studiously relaxed. "There are more and more such tables produced these days. All provide only a snapshot. Oxford was top in the Government's formal research assessment exercise, and in the past we have interchanged with Cambridge and Imperial," a spokesman said.

But senior dons were aggrieved that Oxford was marked down for having a relatively low proportion of overseas students, without regard to the high academic status of its Rhodes and Marshall scholars.

At Oxford 13 per cent of students were from overseas, compared to 40 per cent at the London School of Economics.

Oxford chose to admit some applicants with less than three top grades at A level to give an opportunity to students with potential. The Government welcomed that because it helped increase the intake from state schools. But the policy helped to lower Oxford's placing.

The university had the best record of getting students into jobs, with only 2.6 per cent still seeking work six months after graduation, but this was not reflected in the tables.

Robert Stevens, master of Pembroke College, Oxford, warned last month that the university was in danger of relegation to the international second division.

The spokesman said this was meant to warn ministers against cutting the college fee — a £35 million subsidy supporting the tutorial system at Oxbridge colleges.

Cash rebuff angers PoW campaigners

Ewen MacAskill

JAPANESE prisoner-of-war survivors plan to open a new front in their campaign for compensation from Tokyo by mounting a legal challenge against the British government.

The move comes after the Foreign Office minister Derek Fatchett, in a Commons debate last week, signalled the Japanese government had moved as far as it was likely to go. "In 1955 a then Conservative government minister decided we would not reopen the 1951 peace treaty. The preliminary legal advice that is given to us as a government is that 40 years or more later it's impossible for us to reopen that treaty," he said.

Arthur Titherington, who heads the Japanese Labour Camp Survivors Association said: "Now I am going to have to fight the Japanese and the British governments." His organisation's demand for compensation is going through the courts in Japan, with a judgment scheduled for May 28.

The anger felt by the survivors threatens to mar the visit of the Japanese Emperor Akihito to Britain this month. Members of the survivors association are to line the route to Buckingham Palace and turn their backs on the Emperor as he passes on his way to receive the Order of the Garter from the Queen.

Pressure on the Government increased during the debate in which there was near-unanimity from Labour, Liberal Democrats and Conservatives that the £71 per survivor paid out by the Japanese government in the 1950s went nowhere near enough.

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Blair to head Ulster referendum campaign

John Mullin

TONY Blair will lead the government offensive for a Yes vote in the referendum on the Northern Ireland peace agreement when he arrives in the province this week to kick-start what is likely to prove a bitter campaign.

John Major will also be in Belfast as supporters of the deal seek to halt the No bandwagon. It is threatening to build momentum after the Orange Order announced that it was advising its 80,000 members to oppose the agreement.

The bi-partisan approach at Westminster will be underlined later in the campaign when Paddy Ashdown, leader of the Liberal Democrats, joins the Tory leader William Hague in Northern Ireland. They will both say voters should back the deal on May 22.

There are serious problems ahead for the Yes camp. Unionists are split and Orange Order members amount to nearly one tenth of voters. The Orangemen are angry about the proposed amnesty after two years for convicted terrorists; the prospect of Sinn Fein taking part in a power-sharing executive while the IRA holds on to its arsenal; and reform of the Royal Ulster Constabulary. They worry, too, that the Irish government will have too much influence over Northern Ireland.

Unionists backing the deal allege that the Orange Order is out of touch with moderate Protestant opinion, and say it has been hijacked by hardliners. However, nine of the 13 Unionist MPs are now opposed to the deal, including six Ulster Unionists. Five of these — the exception is Jeffrey Donaldson — have written to their leader, David Trimble, to emphasise that they will campaign against the deal.

Willie Thompson, MP for West Tyrone, said: "The No campaign is gathering momentum. We may not win it because of the nationalist vote but what we will see is that a majority of Protestants will reject it. That will produce a majority of No Unionists in an assembly, enough to kill it off."

But the Ulster Unionist MPs John Taylor — the party's deputy leader — and Ken Maginnis, both supporters of the deal, hit back. They admitted it was imperfect, but challenged opponents to find an alternative.

The Sinn Fein president, Gerry Adams, is expected to continue his efforts to prepare delegates to back the deal at a special conference on May 10.

Meanwhile Republican terrorists failed in an attempt to blow the heart out of Lisburn, Co Down, last week when the army defused a massive car bomb, hours after the IRA ruled out decommissioning its weapons. Lisburn, eight miles from Belfast, houses the Northern Ireland HQ of the British Army.

The IRA provoked anger among Unionist politicians earlier when it said that it would not hand in its arsenal. The agreement requires the decommissioning of all terrorist weapons within two years of the proposed assembly beginning work. No party linked to a paramilitary group is supposed to take its place in the executive until the group has started to hand them over.

Mr Trimble urged Mr Blair to make it clear to Sinn Fein that IRA prisoners cannot benefit from the amnesty envisaged in the deal if the terrorists hold on to their weapons. "It's long past time for the IRA to stop this prevaricating. They must genuinely seek peace, or they must be left behind and denied the benefits of this deal."

Although the IRA said the agreement was incapable of delivering a lasting settlement, it described it as a "significant development". It praised Sinn Fein's leaders and wished them success in the next phase of their peace strategy. That appeared to pave the way for Sinn Fein to endorse the deal at a special *ard fheis* (conference) in Dublin this weekend. Its leaders want Sinn Fein to take up its places in the assembly, a controversial step since it implies recognising partition.

● Terrorists forced the re-routing of the Belfast marathon on Monday after apparently aiming two mortar bombs at an RUC station. Neither hit the intended target

Tagging test pines for Texas

Alan Travis

A BRITISH experiment using an American device to monitor convicted criminals to be introduced later this year has hit a snag — the hi-tech "voice recognition" system only responds to a Texas drawl.

The Home Office scheme involves ordering offenders to carry dedicated pagers with them to ensure check-ins several times a day.

The scheme, an alternative to electronic tagging, will see the convicted criminals being automatically "paged" by a central control according to an agreed schedule or on a random-check basis. The offender will then have to ring a freephone number. Their identity will be verified by a voice recognition system to avoid impersonators.

But the scheme has a major problem before it can be used in Britain. The computer software which has been developed in the United States only responds to Texan accents.

"The system is based on an electronic chip which only recognises the Texan drawl. As soon as it is modified to recognise English accents, the experiment will begin. This is expected to be later this year," said a probation service source.

It is believed the system will be used initially to keep track of daily movements of sex offenders and those who are misusing drugs.

The "tagless tag" will be used in conjunction with a probation order or parole supervision. It is to be run by private contractors.

But Harry Fletcher, assistant general secretary of the National Association of Probation Officers, said: "The way to ensure public safety is to properly fund the probation service, not to plug gaps through using private companies."

Tobacco firm axed warning to mothers

Sarah Boseley

BRITAIN'S biggest tobacco company made a decision in 1974 not to try to stop pregnant women from smoking, even though it knew that unborn babies could be harmed.

The revelations in internal documents belonging to British American Tobacco could open a new front in the wars against the tobacco companies being fought by cancer survivors in Britain and in the United States.

Martyn Day, of the law firm Leigh, Day and Co, who represents some of them, said it might now be possible for the children of women who smoked in pregnancy to sue for compensation.

The papers show that at a meeting in May 1974, BAT's executives considered making it worldwide policy "not to encourage smoking, i) by children ii) by pregnant women iii) to excess". In a draft typed document, the second category, pregnant women, is crossed through in ink several times. In the final document, there are only two categories, and pregnant women do not feature.

The health risks that cigarettes posed to the unborn child were by that time well known in medical circles and to tobacco companies' advisers. Some babies were premature and had very low birth weight, which led to ill-health and possibly low intelligence, while others were born dead or died soon after birth.

As early as 1957 the American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology published a paper on premature births linked to smoking. In 1972, two years before BAT's meeting, the British Medical Journal published what Ann Charlton of Manchester university describes as "the classic paper" by Neville Butler and associates.

In Cigarette Smoking in Pregnancy: Its Influence on Birth Weight and Perinatal Mortality, Prof Butler states that at least 30 per cent of women were smoking regularly beyond the fourth month of pregnancy. If all those women could be persuaded to stop, he wrote, "this might amount to a saving of approximately 1,500 babies each year in England, Scotland and Wales".

The BAT papers are among 39,000 documents deposited as evidence in the court case being fought in the US state of Minnesota. Others show how BAT and other tobacco companies were well aware of the prevailing medical view.

A memorandum dated January 1969, belonging to another big tobacco company, Philip Morris, says: "Now we have a study of the effect of smoking in pregnancy which supports previous conclusions that smoking mothers produce smaller babies. The position of the medical people is that smaller babies suffer detrimental effects all through life."

Mr Day, who has 53 plaintiffs about to begin a court action in Britain, said of the BAT documents: "It is utterly depressing that a multinational company like BAT has taken such a cynical approach."

The documents raise a new issue, he said. He has details of about 500 more smoking cases, and says he will re-open his files.

Clive Bates, director of ASH (Action on Smoking and Health), said: "Perhaps the decision to scrub the pregnant women from the document was based on legal concerns. The moment they acknowledged that there was something to discourage, they would have admitted there was something harmful about pregnant women smoking."

Mr Bates believes tobacco companies were keen not to have warnings about damage to unborn babies on the packets — which did not appear until 1986, the year that the Health Education Authority launched its anti-smoking campaign.

Chris Proctor, the current head of science and regulation at BAT, said he was surprised by the documents and did not know their context. "Why the pregnant women are crossed out I have no idea," he said. "It certainly looks odd. There's been a pretty consistent view in the company that we should not be out there trying to undermine the public health authorities on smoking and health. It has always been policy to advise women who are pregnant to go to a doctor, and the doctor would advise them not to smoke."

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For Israel peace is an imperative

HALF a century from the day Britain's unhappy mandate over Palestine ended, Israel can boast of stunning successes: the ingathering of the exiles has worked. Its population is 5.9 million, nearly 10 times what it was in 1948. One-third of all Jews live in the Jewish state, speaking a living, vibrant Hebrew language that was confined to liturgy when Zionism was born. Israel has a GDP per capita almost the size of Britain's, more friends than at any time in its history and armed forces that can see off all comers from the Mediterranean to the Gulf — and beyond. And these achievements came against a background of appalling tragedy: the Nazi slaughter of 6 million European Jews remains the worst act of genocide the world has known. Pictures of gaunt survivors arriving in their promised land in those first heady days still move even the hardest heart. Auschwitz did much to mould the psyche of Israel.

But conflict accompanied the Zionist enterprise long before Hitler. And the war of 1948, a triumph, albeit a costly one, for the determined, well-organised Jews and a tragedy for the leaderless, divided Arabs, turned out to be just the first round. Successive ones established Israel's overwhelming military superiority, bolstered by the acquisition of a formidable nuclear arsenal and driven by the grim conviction that never again would Jews be helpless victims. By its 30th anniversary in 1978, it had its first peace treaty — with Egypt. Yet a decade later the intifada was shaking the complacent assumption that Israel could rule for ever over angry Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza, occupied since 1967, and driving home the point that there were strict limits to what force can do.

Israel has many problems. It needs to answer the old question of who is a Jew, and how to achieve coexistence between an intolerant religious minority and a truculent secular majority, who wish to live, in the biblical phrase, like *all* the nations, with Big Macs, shopping on the Sabbath, and all the unkosher trimmings. It needs to make its Arab citizens feel they belong.

Yet if mixed emotions accompany this anniversary it is largely because the search for peace has not ended. The late Labour prime minister, Yitzhak Rabin, will always be remembered for the Oslo agreement in 1993, daring to shake hands with Yasser Arafat and acknowledge that a settlement with the Palestinians was an historic imperative — whatever had gone before. Rabin, trusted as a warrior, understood too that his people were striving for a normality that seemed to be part of the promise of a post-cold war world where barriers everywhere were coming down.

Yigal Amir, a fanatical Jewish assassin who was opposed, like so many of his countrymen, to the idea of exchanging land for peace, helped them stay up. His Muslim counterparts in Hamas and Islamic Jihad did their bit, ensuring that Israel, traumatised by their suicide bombs, elected a leader who has not made his predecessor's leap of faith. Haggling over percentages of territory for the next stage of Israel's withdrawal took place in London this week. But the omens were not good, with Binyamin Netanyahu, the Likud prime minister, insisting, after invoking his visit to Auschwitz last week, that he would not be pressured into what he characteristically called "capitulation". And that is before the two sides have even begun to discuss the super-sensitive "final status" issues of Jerusalem, borders and refugees — those Palestinians who lost their homes in what a new generation of Israeli historians, freed from the myths of their founding fathers, now describe as the ethnic cleansing that accompanied victory in 1948.

Israel's independence was the Palestinians' catastrophe. Conflict with the Palestinians and the wider Arab world remains the central, defining problem of Israeli life. Unresolved, it will remain not so much a blot on the country's achievements as a fundamental, distorting flaw. It is a conflict that is far tougher, far more deadly and debilitating than Northern Ireland's.

This newspaper feels a special sense of responsibility. In the years that led up to Britain's Balfour Declaration in 1917, which famously "viewed with favour" the establishment of a Jewish national home in Palestine, the Manchester Guardian and its editor, C P Scott, did much to promote the Zionist cause. And in the 1970s, before it was fashionable to do so, we pioneered the argument that there must be justice for the Palestinians. But our editorial line of 50 years ago remains as fresh and relevant as ever. "If the Jewish state is to prosper they must come to terms with their neighbours at the earliest possible moment," we commented as the state was born. We wish Israel all the very best on its 50th birthday, but urge it yet again — people and government — to try harder still to achieve the just and lasting peace that they and their neighbours so badly need.

Birth pangs of the euro

IT IS difficult to imagine Europe's new currency getting off to a worse start after the shoddy compromise hammered out in Brussels. This will give France the presidency of the new European Central Bank (ECB) from the Dutch halfway through the eight-year first term. The euro was supposed to take politics out of monetary policy, yet its launch has been marred by political fixing of the crudest kind. If this is what a European Central Bank freed from political interference is, then goodness knows what an interventionist model would look like. No one comes out of it well, least of all President Jacques Chirac of France who, like a bullyboy in the playground, picked up the ball and refused to play on until everyone agreed to his terms. The only reason for insisting on a French candidate that he can produce is that "one has to defend ones's own interests". If this principle were applied as ruthlessly by any of the other 10 members of monetary union it would consign the whole project to perpetual stalemate.

Everything was fine until Mr Chirac decided to oppose the appointment of the respected Dutchman Wim Duisenberg as the first president of the bank — the body that will eventually decide interest rates and print the single currency. There is no economic reason for preferring Mr Chirac's candidate (Jean-Claude Trichet, president of the Bank of France) over the Dutchman because they are both strong believers in sound money. Nor is there a sound euro-political reason because the eventual appointment of a Frenchman will not of itself alter the new central bank's independence from political control.

Mr Chirac presumably hopes he will gain political mileage at home by appearing to "stand up" to the Germans after Paris had lost out to Frankfurt as the site of the ECB. But the manner in which he announced that Mr Duisenberg had "freely" decided to step down after only half of his legally binding eight-year term was greeted with laughter even by normally sympathetic French journalists. Under the Maastricht treaty the head of the central bank is supposed to serve for eight years. By insisting on Mr Duisenberg leaving "freely" after only four years, Mr Chirac made a travesty of the spirit of Maastricht and maybe its letter as well. For the French candidate then to assume office for a full eight-year stretch is adding insult to injury. No one in a democracy should be guaranteed a job four years hence, irrespective of how well they do between now and then. The presidency of the ECB is locked up for the next 12 years, thereby depriving other countries that may be members soon — maybe including Britain — from applying as well.

The City of London was expecting investors to sell euro-currencies on Monday and move into the pound or the dollar on the grounds that political interference in ECB's affairs was bound to make the euro weaker than the Deutschmark on which it has been modelled. But these fears were offset by the prospect that German interest rates may rise to prove that the concept of sound money is not being swept aside. Either way it is far too early to judge what effect last weekend's decisions will have on the euro and its competitors. Its more immediate consequences may be political — making it more difficult for Helmut Kohl to win his uphill struggle to be re-elected in September so he can be present at the birth of the euro over which he can claim joint paternity with the French. It will also make it more difficult for Wim Kok's Dutch government to stay in power after this week's elections.

Sadly, none of the French actions was aimed at the central problems of the ECB: such as giving it a remit to compel it to take account of unemployment as well as inflation, and making it politically accountable to European electors. The fact that ECB tenure has been fixed for the next 12 years only underlines the scale of the problem.



How famine sharpens the hunger for power

John Ryle

IT'S NOT hard to create a famine in southern Sudan. All that is necessary is to loot and pillage villages in a single area — stealing livestock and burning crops — and do the same thing a year later. And the year after that. In drought-prone areas the weather will do the rest. Sooner or later the population will be forced to move in search of food.

For displaced people, movement is made harder by fighting. Distances are huge. By the time a displaced person manages to walk to a relief centre, he or she is well on the way to becoming one of the stick people who have come to haunt our television screens again.

It is an easy thing to do, then, to create a famine. And easy too, it seems, once you have done that, to change sides and demand that international agencies come to the aid of the people you have dispossessed. This is what a southern warlord named Kerubino Kuanyin Bol has been doing. If there is any individual who bears immediate responsibility for the mute children with dying eyes who steal into our dreams it is Major-General Kerubino.

As the leader of a government-sponsored militia fighting the rebel Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) in the south, Kerubino spent four years cutting a swathe through the north of Bahr-al-Ghazal, his own home province. Then, last January, he joined the SPLA. This provoked a new movement of civilians fleeing government retribution. Today it is under his protection that international aid agencies, belatedly, unload thousands of tonnes of grain and oil in the attempt to assist displaced people before the rains begin.

The SPLA has welcomed Kerubino back to its ranks as a prodigal son. He was one of the founders of the liberation movement in 1983. Imprisoned for years by its leader, Colonel John Garang, he escaped and joined a splinter group which came to terms with the Khartoum regime. From 1994 his troops, armed by the government, carried out a seasonal blitzkrieg on SPLA-controlled areas of Bahr-al-Ghazal.

The Sudanese government bears ultimate responsibility for the current devastation; but it was Kerubino's choice to become their instrument. And it is to remedy destruction caused by his feud with Garang that the international community will spend tens of millions of dollars flying in food.

For SPLA leaders Kerubino's return has come at an opportune moment, when their offensive against the government is faltering. It suits them that the international community should send food to Bahr-al-Ghazal. It suits them to forget what they said about Kerubino when they were enemies. But the international community should not forget.

In Sudan, as elsewhere, to gain access to the needy aid agencies are forced to negotiate with men of violence. Aid agencies know that they are provisioning fighters as well as civilians, but there is no other way. In these low-intensity wars soldiers are not the ones who suffer. It is civilians under their control, the weak and powerless, who end up as sacks of bones, dying in displacement camps.

Aid prolongs war, even as it saves lives. And there's worse: even as food is flown in under the aegis of the United Nations, some UN members are providing weapons and other military assistance to the warring parties in Sudan. China, Iraq, Iran and Malaysia provide weaponry and training to the Khartoum government. Eritrea and Uganda — with strong United States backing — give military support to the SPLA. South Africa has sold weapons to both sides. Sudan is infested with small arms. But no side has sufficient military superiority to win the war. It is as if, having ring-fenced Sudan, the international community throws scraps over the fence for those inside to fight over. For the Sudanese this is the worst of all worlds.

THE war in Sudan is one of the few wars in Africa where the rebels have a just cause. But this cause has been blurred by the splits in the SPLA and by the war within the south fomented by the Khartoum government.

An arms embargo would not resolve this. What it could do is make explicit the connection between the hidden military economy of Sudan and the aid economy that fuels it. An arms ban would be useless — and ineffective — without a new policy on the part of the countries funding the aid effort — the US and the European Union. This policy would have to apply stringent political conditionality to all aid, subordinating humanitarian assistance to a just resolution of the conflict.

In the meantime, sadly, the culpable incoherence of Western policy and the chronic disorganisation of the relief operation serve only to exacerbate Sudan's long misery.

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Drugs: Hide-and-seek route to sporting glory

Efforts to ensure fair play have not proved an outstanding success, says **John Duncan**

IT IS one of the biggest contests in world sport: the prize for winning, and the cost of taking part, is measured in millions of dollars. But it takes place not on a track or in a swimming pool or a soccer pitch but in laboratories in all five continents. And according to insiders it is a closer battle than it has ever been.

"Let's just say it's a diminishing horizon," said Thomas Reilly, of the John Moores University, Liverpool, a leading authority on drugs in sport. "Procedures have been tightened up from what they were and people who want to get round the tests have to be an awful lot smarter than they used to be."

The drugs spotlight wanders regularly from sport to sport as loopholes close or national federations decide to bite the drugs bullet and get tough on the cheats within, who have either been tacitly tolerated or, in some cases even protected, from outside attention. Drug testing has always been the responsibility of those who have most to lose from the dirtying of their own sport, and it is hardly surprising that sports bodies have sometimes been loath to see their own patch defiled.

"Allowing national governing bodies, international federations and national Olympic committees to govern the testing process to ensure fair play is terribly ineffective," says Robert Voy, former chief medical officer of the United States Olympic committee. "In a sense it is like having the fox guard the hen house."

While drug abuse has been traced back to the ancient Greek games, it is relatively recently that anyone has decided to do anything about it. Testing in any form for drug abuse wasn't introduced until the fifties and sixties as a response to widespread reported abuse of amphetamines, which had been implicated in the death of the cyclists Knut Jensen and Tommy Simpson. Drug abuse was then so widespread that many of the urine samples tested were bright green.

But the testers were way behind. Tests were predictable, and techniques were unsophisticated and couldn't detect the increasingly popular anabolic steroids. The Olympic movement was ponderous and slow in its response to concerns, and steroids were not banned until the 1976 Montreal Games because there wasn't a reliable test for them — eight athletes were disqualified for using them that year.

The next great leap forward came in the 1983 Pan American Games in Caracas when gas chromatography mass spectrometry (GCMS) was used for the first time at very short notice. "The adoption of the GCMS method led to the disqualification of 19 athletes," says David Mottram, of the John Moores pharmacy school. "However, many athletes withdrew from the Games, presumably to avoid the testing programme." For the first time guilty competitors could feel the testers breathing down their necks.

By then, however, the battle was already moving away from stadiums and tracks to the training fields and gyms where athletes prepared themselves, privately and away from the threat of the sample bottle.

To understand why, you have to understand how drugs work. Apart from stimulants most drugs don't immediately enhance performance: you don't just nip into the toilet before a race, take steroids and become a winner. Steroids enable athletes to train harder and recover more quickly from their exertions, aiding the transport of oxygen around the body and assisting athletes in building muscle. Other doping methods affect the number of red blood cells produced or the way that the body deals with carbohydrates. These produce a benefit noticeable on competition day long after evidence of the drug itself has been expelled.

From the early days of drug testing until the 1980s, all athletes needed to do was to choose schedules carefully to avoid traces of banned substances in their urine at competition time.

The testers responded. Norway introduced random out-of-competition testing in 1977, and British athletics started a pilot scheme with the help of the Sports Council in 1985. Now athletes who travel away from home for more than five days must leave an address with the testers so they can be surprised anywhere at any time. Not to do so is an offence, as is failure to give a sample. The steps that must be taken to avoid being caught have become ridiculous, with anecdotal evidence that some athletes use a process called catheterisation to insert someone else's urine into their own bladder at short notice if they have been warned that a tester is on the way.

The personal cost of cheating is now higher than ever. And many of the risks remain unknown. The documented long-term effects of steroids include liver and kidney damage, acne, growth of facial hair and the loss of breasts in women. The effect of other steroids and drugs on the heart, nervous system, brain and bones are suspected. But no one is quite sure how high the cost of drug abuse really is, and there is no ethical way to find out.

For example, when the National Institute of Drug Abuse in the United States was determining how much cannabis it was possible to take in as a passive smoker, the test involved five people in a room being exposed for an hour a day to smoke from six marijuana joints. Steroids are just too dangerous to allow that to happen.

But some athletes are still prepared to pay any price for success. EPO (erythropoietin) is, anecdotally, a fashionable drug, but according to Gabriele Rosa, an athletics coach who used to work with cyclists, it slows night-time heart rate so much that cyclists who use it sleep hooked up to heart-rate monitors that wake them up when their rate slips below a certain level.

The most recent challenge to the testers has come from drugs that are hard to ban because they occur naturally, and in varying concentrations, in the body. This makes them theoretically detectable and, therefore, prohibitable. Human growth hormone, dihydro testosterone and human chorionic gonadotrophin are naturally-occurring substances which are taken artificially to improve stamina and endurance.

Testosterone levels between individuals vary massively, and one drugs insider says that internationally acceptable standards for testosterone have been set so high that it allows women cheats to "get away with murder". But the intractable problem for the authorities is that any test that can't be applied uniformly isn't worth the test tube it is conducted in. And any governing body that doesn't accept that will face a legal challenge.

"Governing bodies are lagging behind the legal support that top athletes can muster to challenge findings," says Professor Reilly. British athletics is still recovering financially from the cost of Diane Modahl's successful legal campaign to clear her name.

The professionalism required of competitors is still not always matched by the professionalism of the governing bodies in dealing faultlessly with drug procedures. The leaking last week of the result of the sample A taken from the Irish swimmer Michelle Smith will give her ample opportunity to sue someone somewhere if she is ultimately found not guilty. An athlete's reputation is at the heart of his or her earning capacity, and drugs is the darkest stain that can be incurred in the pursuit of success.

"I'm not convinced that the scientific solution is all that it is cracked up to be," says Michele Verroken, head of the United Kingdom Sports Council Doping Control Unit. "We need clear commitments from federations, sponsors and governing bodies on their approach to the subject. We won't get the confidence of athletes if federations just dive in and speculate as to the guilt of athletes before they have been given a proper hearing and proper procedures have been followed. The athletes are the key to this."

Michelle Smith, left, is alleged to have tampered with an out-of-competition test conducted by Fina, swimming's world governing body

PHOTO: ALLSPORT

Official testing procedure: step-by-step guide

Athletes can be tested for drugs at any time, either on the day of competition or during training. Short or no notice is given.

1. Athletes are notified in writing by a UK Sports Council Independent Sampling Officer (ISO) that they have been selected for a drugs test.
2. Chaperones accompany athletes to the Doping Control Station, where they are asked to select a urine sample collection vessel. An ISO official (of the same sex) watches the athlete produce the sample. Only the athlete handles the sample. All athletes can have their sport's representative present.
3. Athletes choose a pair of pre-sealed bottles, A and B, between which they divide the sample. The bottle tops are checked by the ISO and both are re-sealed by the athlete. Athletes are asked to declare any medication taken within the previous week.
4. The sample is transported to an accredited laboratory for analysis. Athletes are not identified by name.
5. In the laboratory, sample A is analysed. If it is found to be clean, a negative result is reported to the relevant sport governing body and sample B is destroyed
6. If sample A reveals traces of banned substances, the governing body and the athlete are informed. The athlete may be banned while the case is under consideration.
7. A second analysis of the sample in bottle B is carried out in the presence of the athlete and/or a representative. The athlete has the opportunity to present a case in his or her defence.
8. If sample B proves positive, a decision is taken; the athlete could be either suspended from competition for a given period or banned for life.
9. Every athlete is entitled to appeal against the decision reached

Gas chromotography
Like ink and water on blotting paper, the sample is separated in a gas column in a chromotagraph. The results are fed into a computer where they are indentified.

Gas column

The results
Each 'spike' in the graph represents a particular chemical present in the sample. Some indicate chemicals produced naturally by the body. Others reveal the presence of banned substances.

Drugs detected: by number...

Total number of positive results from the UK testing programme 1988-97

Sport	Positive results
Powerlifting	138
Weight Lifting	60
Athletics	53
Association Football	37
Rugby League	37
Cycling	32
Motor Sports	28
Boxing	22
Body Building	21
Equestrian	18
Rugby Union	18

...and by category

UK Sports Council testing: drugs detected – 1988-95

- Stimulants 36%
- Anabolic Agents 26%
- Narcotic Analgesics 13%
- 14%
- Cannabis 6%
- Blood doping 1%
- Beta-blockers 2%
- Diuretics 1%
- Peptide Hormones 1%

Banned substances

Stimulants
e.g. Amphetamine, Cocaine
Benefits: Increased mental/physical stimulation, alertness and competitiveness
Side Effects: Raised blood pressure, increased and irregular heartbeat, addiction

Narcotic Analgesics
e.g. Methadone, Diamorphine
Benefits: Increases pain threshold
Side Effects: Respiratory problems, nausea, addiction

Anabolic Agents (including Steroids)
e.g. Stanozolol, Testosterone
Benefits: Increased strength, power, endurance and muscle growth
Side Effects: Impotence and kidney damage in men; development of male features and irregular periods in women

Beta-blockers
e.g. Atenolol, Oxprenolol
Benefits: Reduces heart rate and blood pressure to relax nerves and stop trembling
Side Effects: Low blood pressure, slow heart rate, tiredness

Peptide hormones and Analogues
Benefits: Improved oxygen flow and muscle growth control pain
Side Effects:

Diuretics
Benefits: Rapid weight loss
Side Effects: Muscle cramps, dehydration; in extreme cases, kidney failure

GRAPHICS: GRAPHIC NEWS; STEVE VILLIERS; FINBARR SHEEHY

Many intelligent people think the single currency will promote peace and prosperity in Europe. Many intelligent people also think it will lead to economic disaster, and possibly war. Belief in one particular scenario or other is often little more than that – belief. **Anthony Browne** considers the alternatives

And they all lived happily ever after

Dream scenario

FOR THE europhoric, the single currency will transform Europe into an economic powerhouse to rival the United States — with benefits for consumers, workers and businesses. It will lead to greater competitiveness, lower unemployment, lower interest rates and higher living standards.

The most immediate impact of the single currency is the elimination of foreign exchange costs. Tourists will benefit. When they travel abroad within the single currency area, they will no longer have to change francs into marks, or escudos into lire.

The European Commission likes to quote the example of an energetic traveller from one country visiting the 14 others in the Union. If he or she starts with, say, 1,000 French francs and changes money in each country, exchange costs will leave just 500 francs before buying a thing. Under a single currency, such exchange costs will be nearly eliminated. People sending money abroad will also benefit.

Businesses exporting and importing will no longer bear the costs of foreign exchange. They won't have to spend money hedging against currency turmoil. The Commission estimates that, in total, cutting the costs of exchanging money is worth 0.33 per cent of gross domestic product, or around $30 billion a year.

A single currency will also eliminate the indirect costs of currency turbulence. Devaluations and revaluations hit trade. A country that allows its currency to devalue may enjoy an increase in exports, but that will be swamped by the loss of exports from other countries.

Devaluations also make imports more expensive, leading to higher inflation and higher interest rates. Eliminating the risk of exchange rate movements will make Europe more attractive to foreign investors.

The Commission estimates that currency turmoil in Europe in 1995 and 1996 reduced growth by 2 per cent and destroyed 1.5 million jobs.

The single currency should also bring prices down across Europe closer to the levels seen in the US. After 2002, when the single currency notes and coins are introduced, price differences across Euroland will shrink, with goods and services in more expensive areas becoming cheaper.

With goods across 11 countries all quoted in the same currency, consumers and businesses can readily compare prices and buy from the cheapest source. The biggest falls are expected to be in the prices of cars and pharmaceuticals.

But the the largest impact could come from the increase in competition across Europe. The single currency is a large step in the completion of the single market. Companies are no longer deterred by foreign exchange costs from doing business in other countries. Trade will grow faster, and more companies will expand into foreign markets, often by acquiring local firms.

Regional monopolies, which push up prices, will be undermined by intense competition. Added economies of scale will further push down prices.

The benefits of a large market place also apply to the so-called capital, or money markets, where companies go to borrow money. The increased size of the market is likely to decrease the cost of doing a deal, making it easier and cheaper for companies to borrow, and thus to finance investment.



Bank on us: Wim Duisenberg, left, with Jean-Claude Trichet who will replace him as head of the European Central Bank PHOTO: THIERRY CHARLIER

The role of the single currency as a vehicle for reform of economic policies could prove to be as significant as all these benefits. The governments of member countries will be subject to the discipline of the Growth and Stability Pact, and must reduce their borrowing. This will promote stability and help keep inflation low. Governments will also be under pressure to make their labour markets more flexible.

The European Central Bank will be one of the most fiercely independent institutions of its type in the world. This, combined with low government borrowing, will enable it to deliver low inflation with low interest rates. That will be good news for home owners, and will reduce the cost of borrowing by governments — which is good for taxpayers.

Euroland will be the world's second-largest economy, with the greatest share of international trade. The euro will challenge the dollar as the world's leading currency.

Economic folly with no escape hatch

Nightmare ahead

FOR europhobes, 11 into one simply doesn't go. The single currency will impose a straitjacket on the European economy, destroying its flexibility and hampering its growth. The drawbacks will overshadow any benefits. The euro will result in higher unemployment, massive speculative attacks, severe political tensions — possibly even war.

Even before it has started, the political tensions have been apparent. The row between France and Germany over such a simple decision as who is to head the European Central Bank is a foretaste of things to come as each country pursues its own agenda.

Countries might have reduced their borrowing to pass the economic fitness tests for a single currency, but much of it was fudged. Italy imposed a euro-tax that it has to repay at a later date; the French government raided the France Télécom pension fund. Such fudging shows a disregard for the rules that will continue and undermine the euro.

What financial discipline there has been is unlikely to last. In much of the European Union, unemployment is at record levels, and the sackcloth and ashes of the single currency is being blamed. The spending cuts and tax rises needed to reduce borrowing have prompted popular protest in several countries. Few governments will be able to resist the temptation to loosen their belts a little.

The Growth and Stability Pact, which is meant to prevent governments borrowing too much, is both ineffectual and counterproductive. Governments borrowing more than 3 per cent of GDP will, unless they are in recession, be fined. Such fines entrench the difficulties of the adversely affected country, and would certainly lead to severe political recriminations.

The Commission and member states are likely to ignore breaches, and bend over backwards to avoid fining each other.

The pact is one of the many ways in which the single currency hampers governments in their ability to deal with economic problems. If a country has an economic downturn, its government normally helps weather the storm by borrowing more to pay for such things as unemployment benefits or tax cuts. The pact allows no such room for manoeuvre.

Professors Barry Eichengreen and Charles Wyplosz, of the Centre for Economic Policy Research, calculate that had France kept to the pact rules over the past two decades, its economy would have grown by 5 per cent less than it did; Italy's economy would be 9 per cent smaller.

Even if the economies are fairly convergent now, that is unlikely to last as they react differently to changes in the global economy: a slump in world demand for cars will hurt Germany; a surge in gas prices could boost the Netherlands. But even a boom in one area and a recession in another can be dealt with only by a single interest rate.

With the economic centre of Euroland in the North, interest rates are often likely to be inappropriate for peripheral countries such as Portugal, Spain and Ireland. These countries are likely to suffer extreme business cycles, damaging long-term growth and pushing up unemployment.

The world's other large currency union, the United States, suffers such disparities, with a recession in Tennessee while California booms, or vice versa. But when that happens tens of thousands of workers move from where there is no work to where there are jobs. Such labour mobility is unlikely to happen in Europe: cultural and linguistic differences make it almost certain that few Portuguese will move to Finland in search of work.

With a single currency, governments will lose all power to alleviate domestic difficulties. They cannot adjust exchange rates, interest rates, or borrow.

With mounting economic turmoil and little popular support for the single currency, governments — particularly newly elected ones, untarnished by the euro — are likely to want to pull out. History shows that every significant currency union that hasn't been backed by full political union has fallen apart.

But if a country does want to pull out, it will not be an orderly process. There is no mechanism in the Maastricht treaty for withdrawal.

The row over the head of the European Central Bank will seem like a teddy bears' picnic compared with the rows as member countries fight for economic well-being. All will be pursuing different agendas, and all will want to amend, or simply break, the treaty. — *The Observer*

In Brief

US power company Texas Utilities has won the long-running and costly battle to take control of Energy Group, the UK coal and electricity firm. The acrimonious struggle came to an end after PacifiCorp dropped out and the Energy board said it would recommend Texas's valuation of $7.3 billion to its shareholders.

THE rump of Hambros, a City merchant bank with a 160-year history, has been sold for $700 million to Investec, the South African investment bank.

GENERAL Accident and Royal Bank of Scotland, two of the biggest names in British financial services, have been fined a total of more than $665,000 for failures as trustees of funds wrecked by the $660 million rogue-management scandal of 1996 which centred around the activities of then-Morgan Grenfell employee Peter Young.

BRITISH Aerospace drove forward the consolidation of Europe's defence industry by paying $446 million for a 35 per cent stake in Saab, the Swedish aircraft and missile manufacturer.

DEBTS incurred by states in southern Africa during the years of apartheid should be cancelled under international law as illegitimate "odious debt", according to a joint report from the World Development Movement and Action for South Africa.

THE United States accused Greece of widespread piracy of American television programmes and films, and said it would file a complaint with the World Trade Organisation.

SIX senior executives from the New Zealand Dairy Board walked free from the Old Bailey after Customs and Excise dropped charges relating to an alleged evasion of New Zealand's butter quota to Europe in 1995.

THE threat of heavy redundancies hangs over UK industry as new evidence from the National Audit Office and the Confederation of British Industry showed the strength of sterling has driven exporters' confidence to its lowest level since the 1980s.

BRITAIN'S Royal Automobile Club has agreed to sell its motoring service business, which has 5.6 million members, to the US company Cendant for $748 million, giving the RAC's 12,000 full members a windfall profit of up to $60,000 each.

SCOTTISH Power bought Demon, Britain's leading independent Internet service provider, for $110 million.

Lebed resurrects his presidential hopes

Sophie Shihab in Moscow

THE LIKELY victory of the former army general Alexander Lebed in the second round of regional elections in Krasnoyarsk, in Siberia, on May 17 will mark a turning point in the run-up to the Russian presidential election, which is due to take place in two years' time.

President Boris Yeltsin had hoped Lebed would perform badly in Siberia and thus ruin his bid for the presidency. By garnering 45 per cent of the vote in the first round on April 26, and taking a 10-point lead over the outgoing Kremlin-backed governor, Valery Zubov, Lebed has become the man that Yeltsin wants stopped in his tracks.

"Lebed is very dangerous for Yeltsin," says the political analyst Leonid Rodzikhovsky. "If he wins in Krasnoyarsk, the president might be forced to support the mayor of Moscow, Yuri Luzhkov, the only representative of the ruling faction capable of beating the general in a presidential race."

But the powerful Luzhkov, who persists in denying his obvious presidential ambitions, embodies a development model for Russia based on a combination of authoritarianism and mafia practices. That is something Yeltsin is believed not to wish to leave as his legacy to Russia.

The future presidential election may not in fact boil down, as seems likely at the moment, to a two-horse race between Lebed and Luzhkov. With two years still to go — always assuming that Yeltsin's health holds out — much can still change. But the possibility of a plausible new presidential candidate emerging from the government ranks is widely doubted.

The only declared contender in that camp, former prime minister Viktor Chernomyrdin, who is totally lacking in charisma, has only a slender chance of becoming president. The same is true of the "young reformer" Boris Nemtsov, whose popularity has slumped in the past year.

This places the Kremlin in the uncomfortable position of having to choose a successor from the ranks of the most popular politicians, virtually all of whom are in opposition.

General election . . . Lebed campaigns in Krasnoyarsk last week with French actor Alain Delon

It is hard to be popular in Russia without criticising a regime which has proved incapable of ensuring that people get paid on time or curbing the activities of financial criminals, who hire contract killers whenever they deem it necessary.

It is true that today's presidential candidates are only nominally in the opposition. Luzhkov, popular because he inveighs against "the monetarism of the democrats who have ruined Russia", heads an empire that rivals those of "private-sector" financial oligarchs such as Boris Berezovsky and his great rival, Vladimir Potanin. Lebed would not have been able to make his political comeback without Berezovsky's help.

There remains the question of who the Communist party will field for the presidential race. Whether it is Gennady Zyuganov or someone else, that contender will have no chance of beating a Yeltsin-backed candidate in the second round, and especially not one who is seen to have one foot in the opposition camp.

The Krasnoyarsk election would suggest that a Communist candidate might not even make it to the second round of the presidential poll. The Communist Pyotr Romanov, who came third with 13 per cent of the vote, way behind Lebed and Zubov, does not seem up to the task of keeping Lebed out. Some of Romanov's supporters are likely to vote for Lebed in the second round.

That is why observers believe the general is bound to win in Krasnoyarsk. He is capable of mobilising protest voters who are disgruntled with the Communists, and Vladimir Zhirinovsky's Nationalists — two parties that joined forces in Krasnoyarsk, after having discredited themselves once again in the eyes of their supporters by agreeing to horse-trade with Yeltsin during the latest government crisis.

The pact Lebed struck with Berezovsky in Krasnoyarsk, on the other hand, could be interpreted as an act of rebellion against the Kremlin. Last week papers controlled by Berezovsky's rivals (Potanin and Luzhkov) published articles alleging that he openly opposes Yeltsin, while at the same time using his knowledge of the presidential family's financial secrets to blackmail him.

In a recent television interview Berezovsky reaffirmed his support for Lebed's candidacy — which irked Yeltsin mightily — and explained that only the general could steal votes from Luzhkov at the presidential election, thus opening the way for a possible third Kremlin-backed candidate who was more orthodox and closer to Berezovsky. That man could be Chernomyrdin.

Berezovsky also repeated his misgivings about the president's protégé, Sergei Kiriyenko, whose appointment as prime minister he tried to prevent. After being rebuffed by Yeltsin, Berezovsky seems poised to get his own back as a result of Lebed's unexpected success in Krasnoyarsk.

(April 29)

Right blamed for Guatemala bishop's killing

Bertrand de la Grange in Mexico City

ON APRIL 26, barely two days after publishing a damning report on the atrocities committed by the army during Guatemala's civil war, which lasted from 1960 to 1996, Monsignor Juan Gerardi, auxiliary bishop and head of the archbishopric's human rights bureau, was murdered in the capital, Guatemala City.

The bishop's body was found in the garage of the presbytery of San Sebastian church, 300 metres from the presidential palace and the cathedral. According to the initial results of investigations, it appears that the his head was crushed with a brick.

The coincidence between the publication of the report and the murder of its main author has been pointed out by human rights organisations in Central America, as well as by Amnesty International and the United Nations, which mentioned the key role played by Gerardi in publishing the facts and figures of that "dirty war", as well as the testimony of its victims.

The 1,400-page report, entitled Guatemala: Never Again, estimates that the civil war left 150,000 people dead and 50,000 unaccounted for, as well as 200,000 orphans and 40,000 widows.

On top of that, 1 million people had to abandon their villages, especially in the Quiché department, near the Mexican border, where the army launched a violent offensive in the early eighties in an attempt to wrest back control of territory won by guerrillas with the help of indigenous inhabitants, who form the majority of the population in that region.

Gerardi was appointed bishop of Quiché in 1974. In 1981 he was forced into exile: priests in his diocese had been murdered, and several attempts had been made on his life.

On his return to Guatemala he was appointed auxiliary bishop of Guatemala City. He then set up the archbishopric's human rights bureau, which quickly became the most reliable source of information on the numerous atrocities committed not only by security forces and death squads working for the regime, but also by guerrillas in the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Union (URNG).

More than a year before the signing of a peace agreement by President Alvaro Arzú and the URNG in December 1996, Gerardi's team had undertaken exhaustive investigations as part of a programme of "retrieval of the collective memory". Its main aim was to encourage reconciliation among Guatemalans by clearly establishing both sides' responsibilities for atrocities committed against the civilian population.

"The truth hurts, but it is necessary," the bishop said on April 24, when he presented his report, which blames the army for almost 80 per cent of the outrages.

It could be that the publication of such a damning report greatly irritated the most recalcitrant elements of Guatemalan society, who never accepted the signing of the peace agreement in the first place, and who have not given up hope of scuppering it by creating an atmosphere of confrontation.

That is the argument put forward by Rigoberta Menchu, winner of the 1992 Nobel Peace Prize, who has accused "the death squads of having committed this political murder so as to sabotage the peace agreement", and hinted that the military may have had a hand in the affair.

The leaders of the former guerrilla forces, too, have described the murder as "an operation aimed to destabilise the country". But they are careful not to implicate the army, with which they have been on good terms ever since it reduced its numbers by a third and pensioned off officers who had been active in the repression.

(April 29)

10 killed in violence over pyramid sales

Frédéric Bobin in Beijing

TEN people were killed and 100 wounded during an outbreak of violence that has rocked the Chinese province of Hunan in recent days. It was sparked by the authorities' decision to ban "direct sales" networks. Six demonstrators died in the town of Zhangjiajie, while in Hengyang four employers were lynched by an angry mob of salesmen.

Disgruntlement had been rising for several weeks as the Beijing government increasingly clamped down on pyramid sales networks, which, it alleged, were threatening social stability.

In Wuhan, in Hubei province, 20,000 peasants who had been shortchanged by swindlers demonstrated in the centre of town in mid-April.

The organisers of the sales network had sold them rocking chairs, promising them that they would make a fortune by re-selling them from door to door. But the chairs were too expensive and therefore unsellable, and the peasants were unable to get their money back.

Direct selling is based on a technique popular in the United States, which requires each salesperson to recruit five others, who then recruit another five, and so on. It has been immensely popular in China since the eighties. Millions of Chinese became obsessed with the possibility of making a fortune in that way.

Alongside such US firms as Amway, Avon and Mark Kay, a host of swindlers soon muscled in on the business. At the height of the craze, hundreds, if not thousands, of companies, many without any legal foundation, set up networks in some 30 Chinese cities.

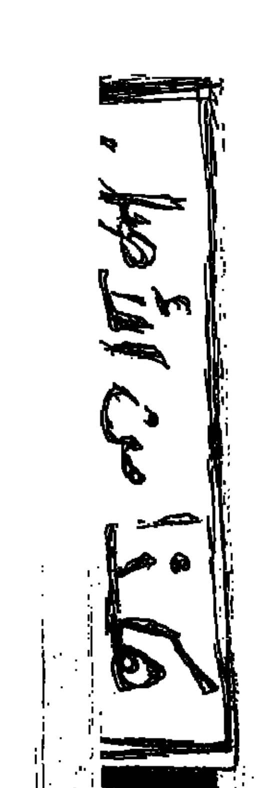
According to the Economic Information Daily, 10 million Chinese got sucked into the system. The turnover of this novel business activity in 1996 was in the region of 10 billion yuans ($1.25 billion).

It was such a fast-growing sector that the alarm bells started ringing in central government. What the regime fears more than anything else is a phenomenon of collective swindling that results in people ending up on the streets.

What happened in Albania last year gave the Chinese authorities food for thought. On top of that, "motivation meetings" of salespersons sometimes generate an almost religious fervour that is anathema to the authorities.

The government's decision to ban direct sales techniques will come into effect in October. In the meantime US firms affected by the move will have plenty of time to ask Washington to respond. The issue is on the agenda of the Sino-American talks on China's membership of the World Trade Organisation.

(May 2)



Brazil ranchers grow rich on 'slave labour'

Danielle Rouard in Rio Maria

PAULO, a thin, wrinkled man in his 40s, was huddling in the Catholic hostel of Rio Maria, a town of 15,000 inhabitants in the northern Brazilian state of Para. A native of the Nordeste, he had worked for several years as a labourer, then as a recruiting agent, or *gato* (cat), for a big local *fazendeiro* (estate-owner), Fernando Carioca.

When Paulo demanded that he be paid the month's wages owed to him, Carioca threatened him in the presence of his *pistoleiros*: "You keep your mouth shut, or I'll run you over with my car." Paulo decided to flee rather than end up dead. Nine peasant trade unionists murdered by other fazendeiros, whose illegal practices they had been hampering, are buried in rudimentary graves in Rio Maria's cemetery.

The fazendeiros rule over several hundred thousand hectares of pasture, where cattle and zebu graze. The land, once Amazonian forest, was cleared by battalions of mainly seasonal labourers known as *peões* (literally "pawns"). Rio Maria mushroomed 15 years ago on the banks of a tributary of the Amazon. Despite its phonecard telephone booths and cash dispensers, it feels more like a 19th century Wild West outpost, where neither the law nor God is respected, even though its churches are packed out.

Paulo had come to the hostel to seek help from Brother Henri Burin des Roziers, a 68-year-old French Dominican monk, who is one of the lawyers working for the Pastoral Land Commission (CPT), a Catholic association to help the landless.

Paulo, like Ricardo, another refugee at the hostel, was lured from the Nordeste to Para state when he heard that people were needed to clear the jungle and turn the land into pasture. There were even rumours that gold was still to be found there. The recruiting agent, who had travelled from Para state to the Nordeste to recruit peões told applicants they would be paid $45 for every five-hectare unit they cleared. "It's no more than a week's work," he said. For jobless and landless peasants, it was a tempting offer. "We were men of honour and agreed not to bother with a written contract," Paulo says. The gato gave them an advance so they could "fill their houses with food" enable their families to keep going while they were away.

When, after a long and gruelling journey by lorry, the peões arrived at their destination, they found they were a long way from anywhere. "We were surrounded by jaguars, cobras and mosquitoes," Ricardo says. "The gato told us to build our encampment. We erected shelters, put up hammocks, dug a hole for an oven and drank water from a stagnant waterway nearby. Then we took our machetes and cleared the forest from 4am to 10pm. Our encampment was surrounded by pistoleiros."

It soon became clear that it took each peon not one week but three to clear five hectares. Their pay for doing that turned out to be $18, not the promised $45. They had to buy food from the gato at prices that were 10 times higher than in town. "When he did his accounts, we found we were always deeper and deeper in debt. He reminded us that we owed him money for our advance payment, travel costs, housing, food and the cost of our tools. The interest he charged on our debts was 20 per cent a month."

When Ricardo and some of his fellow peões refused to work under such conditions, they were encircled by pistoleiros and beaten up by Carioca himself. "How could we escape? We were far from any human habitation, in a region we weren't familiar with, and surrounded by a hostile natural environment." In the end Ricardo took the risk and managed to flee to Rio Maria.

João was aged 16 when he was taken on to work for a fazendeiro last year. One evening last August a 17-year-old friend of his was beaten senseless and left to the mercy of wild animals. He was never seen again. João managed to elude the surveillance of the pistoleiros and, after wandering through the forest for a whole night, ended up on a road.

A lorry-driver picked him up. "Instead of taking me straight back to the fazendeiro, as they usually do, he hid me under a tarpaulin when we came up against a roadblock of pistoleiros and drove me to the association of peasants that employed him." The head of the association had been to meetings organised by the CPT to warn people about slave labour, and had told the lorry-driver "the whole story".

Jairo Andrade, aged 63, is one of the wealthiest fazendeiros in Brazil. Along with his wife, who is the cousin by marriage of a former president, he owns 125,000 head of cattle, which graze on reclaimed land in Para, Tocantins, Goias and Minas Gerais. He also heads a bottled-gas company, a construction firm and a printing works. The "zebu king" wears a very chunky gold chain and a pendant representing a zebu's head. That is his only outward sign of wealth: Andrade does not like showing off.



Landless labourers clear a field in northeastern Brazil

PHOTOGRAPH: PAUL HARRISON

'Attempts are made to establish artificial values, so wages are never paid. As they are in debt, the workers are prevented from leaving the ranch'

He has good reason to be cautious, and now sees reporters only in the presence of a man he calls his "company lawyer". In 1994 the daily O Estado de São Paulo published an article by a journalist who reported Andrade as saying he had "avenged" the murder in 1986 of one of his sons by protesters occupying his land. He tracked down the nine peasants he suspected of having taken part in the murder and had them killed one by one.

He argued that he had been perfectly entitled to poison Bishop Patrick Hanrahan — a murder that was never pinned on him — and to get Pedro da Conceiçao, a peasant leader, "assassinated by the police for $1,500". Andrade later denied he had made any such remarks, but the reporter stuck to his story.

Since then Andrade has had other reasons to step carefully. Following repeated complaints that he was using slave labour on his fazendas, he was visited by the regional labour inspectorate. He claims he got a clean bill of health: "I paid the fines I got for breaking the law on hygiene and safety. But contrary to what has been claimed the inspectors found no slaves here."

One of the peões' charges is that Andrade forces them to work under threat and without pay. "They squander their advance on their very first day," he retorts, "and are unwilling to keep up a proper work rhythm. They owe me money and they have to work to pay me back. That's only normal."

When it is pointed out to him that his peões also have to pay for their tools, he barks: "And what about you? Don't you have to buy your pen and your notebook?" He seems startled to learn that this is not so. But didn't his pistoleiros prevent the peões from voicing complaints or leaving the fazenda? "As soon as they have finished paying back what they owe, they're free men. That's only normal."

The evidence contained in the report of the regional labour inspectorate, whose members visited Andrade's fazenda last October, speaks for itself: "On the forest-clearing site, work under surveillance and ill-treatment; bare feet, no facilities or drinking water, a plastic roof, no wall to offer protection from mosquitoes and animals; tacit agreements between the owner and the subcontractor, Renaldo, who recruits workers; agreements almost never respected.

"Attempts are made to establish artificial values, so wages are never paid. As they are in debt, the peões are prevented from leaving the fazenda. They do not try to leave for fear of reprisals. Andrade is a violent man. During our inspection he shouted at Renaldo, who denied he owed him anything. Andrade claimed the promised work had not been completed and said Renaldo would not leave the fazenda until it had been, as he [Andrade] was the man in charge. When a peon tried to speak, Andrade starting hitting him."

The Rural Democratic Union (RDU) was founded by Andrade and other fazendeiros to foil attempts by peasants to occupy land. "We don't need the RDU as much as we used to — we've succeeded in pacifying the region," Andrade claims.

He nevertheless visited Brasilia at the end of March to see his "friend", the justice minister Iris Resende, himself a big fazendeiro. "He secured me a meeting with the employment minister, who advised me to be patient. We're in the run-up to an election. But afterwards the government has every intention of cracking down on those gangsters."

Andrade remains critical of the regime: "Despite all the respect I have for President [Fernando Henrique] Cardoso, I have to say he lacks the skills to carry through the agrarian reforms. As for the clergy, they have very short memories. We were the people who set them up here, when Amazonia was colonised. They didn't say a word against those who murdered my son. Only the peões, whom they describe as slaves, are entitled to their compassion."

Ruth Villela, national secretary of the labour inspectorate, set up the Movel (mobile) Group in 1995. It is a flying squad that tries to catch those employing "slaves" *in flagrante delicto*. Culprits risk anything from two to eight years in prison.

Villela, a petite woman in her 40s, says: "There's no question of shrouding the results of our inquiries in diplomatic secrecy." She smiles at the suggestion that she may get her arm twisted: "It's all part of the game."

In April last year President Cardoso decorated Villela and her team for their work in encouraging respect for the Human Rights Convention, to which Brazil subscribes. In the three years since it was set up, Movel has had 15 companies convicted of using slave labour. It has freed 478 peões.

One such peon was 17-year-old Y, who worked at a fazenda in São Felix do Xingu. Last October he fled from the encampment where he was working and sought refuge with the CPT. On its advice he lodged an official complaint. Movel was alerted. Ten days later its inspectors swooped without warning on the fazenda, accompanied by the plucky Y. There were 220 peões clearing land "in conditions comparable to slave labour", according to the inspectors and the federal police escorting them.

The inspectors published the results of their 12-day investigations in a weighty report. In it there is a photograph of 220 beaming peões, now fully paid, about to board coaches and travel back to their distant home — all at the expense of the fazendeiro. That was only part of his punishment: the court ordered his land expropriated and redistributed to peasants. Six months on, this has still not happened.

In February, in what was a first for the Brazilian justice system, a fazendeiro, Antonio Barbosa, was given a two-year suspended prison sentence and a hefty fine. The public prosecutor's courage and Movel's efficiency swept away the legal obstacles that are the rule in Para state, as elsewhere in Brazil.

The CPT and the peasants' unions pass on a large number of complaints to the regional and federal labour inspectorate, the federal police and parliament's National Human Rights Commission. "In Para state alone, 3,527 cases were denounced between 1983 and 1993; the figure for the period from 1993 to the end of 1997 is already 3,917," says Burin des Roziers.

But at regional level, four out of five cases end up being shelved. Paulo Rocha, MP for Para and a former trade unionist, gave the law more teeth last September. In the bill he got adopted by parliament, slavery through indebtedness is clearly defined; and the withholding of contracts and the deprivation of liberty are punishable offences. Employers are now obliged to transport peões back to their places of origin once the season is over. Heavier fines are imposed in the case of minors under 18.

Even though such punishment is now provided for by the law, the CPT, and Vallela and her team believe that Movel's arms are tied. They should be immediately called in as soon as a serious complaint is registered. If slavery is reported, their investigations should automatically result in the case being referred to a federal court, since the local police and judiciary always exert considerable pressure.

They also feel that inspectors who catch fazendeiros using slave labour should be allowed to give evidence, as it is extremely difficult to convince terrorised victims to take the witness stand.

(April 25)

Abortion Clause Sinks U.N. Dues Bill

Helen Dewar

THE SENATE last week narrowly approved legislation to pay nearly $1 billion in back dues to the United Nations. But in a move that is certain to draw a presidential veto, the bill imposes a ban on any U.S. aid to international family planning groups that lobby for abortion rights.

The Senate narrowly approved the measure 51 to 49 over the opposition of most Democrats. The anti-abortion language originally was attached to the legislation by House Republicans in an attempt to force President Clinton to accept it as the price for approval of the U.N. payments.

Clinton has strongly supported payment of the U.N. arrearages, and U.S. and U.N. officials have warned Congress that the United States could lose influence in the international body if the payments are not made soon. But White House aides have said he will not sign the bill if it contains anti-abortion language.

"We hope they get it up here quickly so that the president can veto it and we can get on with a process of passing a bill that the president can sign. We can address the family planning issue separately," White House spokesman Barry Toiv said.

Clinton, in remarks made before the vote, said, "I don't think that is a responsible, mature message to send to the world by the leading country in the world. I think that if we want to lead, we ought to lead and we ought to lead by example by paying our way." The president also sent a letter to House and Senate leaders urging approval of $18 billion for the International Monetary Fund.

With a two-thirds vote of both houses required to override a veto, the close Senate vote ensures that a Clinton veto would be sustained by Congress, leaving the whole question of paying U.S. debts to the U.N. in grave doubt.

An aide to Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Jesse Helms, R-North Carolina, said the Senate would wait a few days before sending the measure to Clinton in hopes that he might change his mind, and GOP leaders warned of dire consequences if Clinton does not sign the measure.

Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott, R-Mississippi, warned that further action on U.S. arrears is unlikely and said a veto "would be a big mistake for our foreign policy apparatus."

In an echo of the fight that delayed funding for both the U.N. and International Monetary Fund last year, House GOP conservatives had insisted again this year on including language that would bar international family planning groups that receive U.S. aid from lobbying foreign governments to change their abortion policies. They included the abortion restrictions as part of a broader State Department authorization bill that would pay the U.N. and also reorganize foreign policy agencies, and planned to insert it in the IMF bill, which is bogged down in the House.

Democrats bitterly denounced the linkage of abortion restrictions to U.N. payments, saying it amounted to "legislative blackmail," as Sen. Joseph R. Biden Jr., D-Delaware, ranking Democrat on the Foreign Relations Committee, put it.

The bill would provide $819 million in back U.S. dues to the U.N. and forgive $107 million in debts owed to the United States by the international organization, mostly for peace-keeping costs. Together, this accounts for most but not all of the money that the U.N. claims it is owed by the United States. In return, the U.N. would have to make cost-cutting and other reforms in its operations and agree to cut the U.S. share of its budget.

Six Nigerians To Die for Coup Plot

James Rupert in Lagos

A MILITARY tribunal sentenced six men to death last week for plotting a coup against Nigeria's military ruler, Gen. Sani Abacha.

The condemned men included Nigeria's former deputy head of state, Lt. Gen. Oladipo Diya, who maintained that he had been framed by officers closer to Abacha who fabricated the plot. Some Nigerian analysts said Abacha loyalists sought to remove Diya from the political scene because he opposed Abacha's plan to prolong his rule by transforming himself into a civilian president.

Abacha, who took power in a 1993 coup, has promised to bring back civilian rule by October of this year. Nigeria has been ruled by the military for 28 of the 38 years since its independence from Britain.

But recent developments, notably the decision by each of Nigeria's five political parties to adopt Abacha as its candidate in a presidential election in August, have dimmed hopes here for a free transition to civilian governance.

The two-month coup trial, which was held in secret, has been interwoven with a murky political tussle within Nigeria's military over Abacha's effort to retain power, Nigerian scholars and diplomats said. The military officer corps, by far the country's most powerful political force, appears deeply divided over the issue, they said.

The trial has helped increase tension among Yorubas, the main ethnic group of southwestern Nigeria, many Nigerians have said. All six men sentenced to die — and most of the 24 other defendants in the coup trial — are Yorubas, a group that feels politically marginalized by the elites of Hausa-speaking northern Nigeria, to which Abacha belongs.

Those sentenced to death included two former cabinet officers, Maj. Gen. Tajudeen Olanrewaju and Maj. Gen. Abdulkareem Adish, and a civilian. Four defendants were sentenced to life in prison, including a newspaper editor, Niran Malaolu.

Posters for candidates running for governor are stuck on a wall in Kano, northern Nigeria. But hopes for a transition to democracy have been dimmed by recent events

PHOTO: DAVID GUTTENFELDER

NATO's Achievement

EDITORIAL

PRESIDENT Clinton launched NATO enlargement, and a Republican Senate ratified it. This one-two provides a richly bipartisan achievement for American foreign policy. The accession of Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic amounts to a major expansion of American defense responsibilities, with commensurate risks and costs, some impossible now to calculate. But — and here is the rationale for enlargement — it also amounts to an expansion of deterrence, stability and encouragement for democracy in the heart of a continent of paramount American interest.

Opponents of ratification never had the horses in the Senate. Nonetheless, the opponents, in and out of the Senate, did raise serious questions that require attention. One of the two principal questions concerns those extra risks and costs. The best response to it is that the extension of NATO into the gray area of the new Central European democracies should diminish the strategic uncertainty that is the region's chief threat. With the shrinking of uncertainty comes the containment of the costs and risks. That is the very premise of the new decision.

The other principal question is whether the movement of NATO hundreds of miles closer to Russia's borders, with further movement perhaps to come, may not provoke Russia into a backward-looking nationalistic policy. It would be foolish to say that Russia, still in a phase of uprootedness and transition, cannot be further alienated. But that simply makes it prudent to engage with Russia more deeply across the board in order to prevent the opponents' dire forecasts from becoming true by official default. No doubt many Russians would prefer to keep Central Europe a sphere of influence in which traditional Russian security ambitions prevail over the wishes of the new democracies. But the Cold War was fought, on the American side, precisely to prevent that old habit from being sustained.

Iran Still Sponsors Terrorism, U.S. Says

R. Jeffrey Smith

IRAN HAS remained a leading sponsor of international terrorism and assassinations, despite the country's election of a new president last August and a shift in some of its public rhetoric about terrorism, the Clinton administration said last week.

Issuing its annual survey of terrorist incidents around the globe, the State Department called Iran "the most active sponsor of state terrorism" in 1997. It blamed Iranian agents for "at least 13 assassinations," mostly involving opponents of the regime who resided in northern Iraq, and said Tehran continued to provide money, training and weapons to various Middle East terrorists.

"Terrorist activity directed from Iran has continued into 1998," a senior U.S. official told reporters on condition he not be named. Neither he nor the report offered details to back up this allegation, and he refused to address whether the pace or number of Iranian-inspired terrorist acts has changed this year.

U.S. officials say that Iran's links to terrorist acts are one of the largest roadblocks to improved relations with the United States, and they have been watching to see whether president Mohammed Khatami's moderate style is matched by a discernible policy shift.

In November and January, for example, the Iranian foreign ministry criticized specific terrorist attacks against tourists in Egypt and Muslim worshippers. Khatami also told CNN in January that he opposed terrorist attacks against women and children. But U.S. officials say Khatami's influence in this area evidently remains limited, and the report notes that leaders of various terrorist organizations gathered last fall in Tehran to discuss enhanced coordination and seek more funds.

Iran's new leadership also reaffirmed a foundation's offer of a $2.5 million reward for slaying British author Salman Rushdie, continuing a policy in effect since 1989, the report notes.

No similar allegations of direct participation or support for terrorist acts in 1997 were levelled against any of the other six nations formally listed by Washington as state sponsors of terrorism — Cuba, Iraq, Libya, North Korea, Sudan, and Syria. But it accused each of them of providing refuge and in several cases training for known terrorists.

Cuba, for example, has allegedly given sanctuary to terrorists from the Basque region of Spain and from Latin America, and maintained contact with leftist insurgent groups from Colombia and elsewhere in Latin America. But the report also notes that "Cuba no longer supports armed struggle in Latin America" and "is not known to have sponsored any . . . incidents in 1997." It lists but does not assign any responsibility for a series of bombings at Havana hotels and restaurants in 1997.

The report, which reflects the consensus of U.S. intelligence agencies, indicates that last year continued a trend of reduced incidence of politically-motivated violence against noncombatants, according to the 86-page report. The report noted a total of 304 incidents, an increase of eight over 1996 but still one of the lowest tallies since the early 1970s.

Yeltsin Recalls Old Guard to Fill Posts

Daniel Williams in Moscow

A POLITICAL crisis that erupted in March ended uneventfully last week as President Boris Yeltsin stocked his new government mostly with reformist holdovers from the previous cabinet.

Of 19 officials appointed, 13 belonged to the ousted government of Viktor Chernomyrdin and several hold the same posts, including the key finance, economics, foreign policy and defense portfolios.

The biggest surprise of the crisis was Yeltsin's first appointment: Sergei Kiriyenko, the youthful prime minister who replaced the stolid Chernomyrdin in March's shake-up.

In the end, the cabinet selections were overshadowed by continuing intrigues surrounding Anatoly Chubais and Boris Berezovsky, two arch-enemies from the old government.

When the pair served together under Yeltsin, their feuding became the arena for working out opposing visions of Russia's future. Chubais, formerly Yeltsin's chief economic adviser, came out against concentrating wealth and influence in the hands of a few business magnates. Berezovsky, a banking tycoon who was once Yeltsin's chief security adviser, defends the privileges of oligarchy.

Yeltsin appointed Chubais to head Unified Energy Systems, the country's energy monopoly. The appointment followed by a day the naming of Berezovsky to oversee the workings of the Commonwealth of Independent States, the Russian-led grouping of former Soviet republics.

Yeltsin in effect kept both actors — and their visions — in play. "It's a Byzantine game of counter-balancing, a favorite Yeltsin tool," said Andre Piontkovsky, a political analyst.

As for Kiriyenko, the former energy minister and political neophyte was hired to manage, and many analysts regard his lack of political ambition as the main reason for his selection. "In general, the profile of the cabinet has been changed through the prime minister. It is to be businesslike and technocratic," said Vyacheslav Nikonov, head of a think tank here.

Kiriyenko reduced the number of deputy prime ministers from seven to three and eliminated the two posts of first deputy prime minister.

Russia faces severe economic problems from a combination of mismanagement and adverse economic factors, notably the decline in prices for oil and gas, the country's main exports. The Yeltsin government has been notoriously inefficient in collecting taxes and paying wages to state employees. Economic growth, a key goal for the year, remains elusive.

"The choices for any government would be narrow," said Piontkovsky. "It will have to work in a difficult period."

Finance Minister Mikhail Zadornov, a key holdover from the former government, announced the government will slash spending and auction off state property with an eye to filling budget gaps.

Chubais' new job places him in a strategic position. UES, as the energy giant is known, supplies electricity to all of Russia. It has been chronically unable to collect electric payments from heavy users, and the government has had to make up repeated shortfalls. Success will place Chubais in a good position for future appointments, while failure might mean the end of his career. He will be trying to collect revenue from many of his oligarch foes. Kiriyenko gave him until the fall to show results.

Berezovsky, with his appointment as executive secretary of the Commonwealth of Independent States, won back a measure of respectability. He was ousted as Yeltsin's security aide last year in a power struggle with Chubais.

His nomination raised eyebrows in Moscow because he and Yeltsin have been feuding over Russian politics. Yeltsin was unhappy with Berezovsky for opposing Kiriyenko's appointment.

Berezovsky's diplomatic career is limited to efforts to improve Moscow's relations with the breakaway southern republic of Chechnya. Despite tensions with Yeltsin, he remains a confidant of the president's daughter, Tatyana, and continues to handle the Yeltsin family finances.

He will preside at a CIS meeting in July among lower-level officials to reorganize the commonwealth. "The time has come for decisive steps to build a real CIS," Berezovsky said. "Private capital is the only force able to consolidate the CIS."

Among Berezovsky's business interests is oil, and oil has become a key growth industry in the Central Asian region of the former Soviet Union. So far, his companies have won no stakes in the region.

Berezovsky is regarded as among the wiliest and most ruthless of Russia's new breed of businessmen. He is now in a position to explore new investment vistas among Moscow's neighbors.

The Communist Party, which makes up the biggest faction in Russia's lower house of parliament, assailed both Berezovky's and Chubais' appointments.

Communist leader Gennady Zyuganov declared his party would not cooperate with the new government and, among other measures, would block ratification of the START II arms reduction treaty with the United States.

Rage and Redemption

OBITUARY
Eldridge Cleaver

ELDRIDGE CLEAVER, the information minister of the Black Panther Party whose searing rhetoric and exhortations of insurrection made him a revolutionary cult leader of the 1960s, died last week in California. He was 62.

Mr. Cleaver, who had served almost 12 years in prison on a variety of assault, drug and theft charges, was author of the best-selling "Soul on Ice," a collection of essays about his own life and the fate of black people in the United States, written while he was in jail in California. Published in 1968, the book became the political manifesto of the Black Panther Party, which Mr. Cleaver helped organize in 1966, with Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale.

After a gun battle with Oakland police in 1968, Mr. Cleaver fled the United States, living for the next seven years in Cuba, France and Algeria. In 1975, he returned as a born-again Christian, renounced his revolutionary views and subsequently joined the Republican Party.

Later he battled drug and alcohol addictions and in 1994 underwent brain surgery after being hit on the head and knocked unconscious during a cocaine buy. After that experience, he promised to stay clean.

Mr. Cleaver, the son of a nightclub piano player and a schoolteacher, was born in Wabbaseka, Arkansas. In the early 1950s, he was sent to reform school for bicycle theft and then for selling marijuana. Only days after his second release, he was rearrested for possession of marijuana and reincarcerated for 30 months at the California State Prison at Soledad. There he completed high school, and he read voraciously, including the writings of Karl Marx, Thomas Paine, Voltaire, Lenin and W.E.B. DuBois.

Released in 1957, he returned to the streets, where he sold marijuana and committed rape. In "Soul on Ice," he would later write: "I started out by practicing on black girls in the ghetto . . . where dark and vicious deeds appear not as deviations from the norm, but as part of the sufficiency of the Evil of a day — and when I considered myself smooth enough I crossed the tracks and sought out white prey . . . rape was an insurrectionary act. It delighted me that I was defying and trampling upon the white man's law, upon his system of values."



Cleaver went from crime to Islam, to Marxism and back to Christianity

A year after getting out of Soledad, Mr. Cleaver was arrested and convicted of assault with intent to murder. He was imprisoned at San Quentin and later at Folsom Prison. "After I returned to prison," he wrote, "I took a long look at myself and for the first time in my life admitted that I was wrong, and that I had gone astray . . . That is why I started to write. To save myself."

Seeking a program of self-discipline, he joined the Black Muslims. Paroled from prison in 1966, Mr. Cleaver became active with the Black Panthers, calling for an armed insurrection to overthrow the U.S. government and for the establishment of a black socialist government in its place. FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover said the Black Panthers were the nation's "greatest threat."

In April 1968, after the assassination of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., Mr. Cleaver became involved in a shootout with Oakland police. He was charged with attempted murder.

By then, "Soul on Ice" had made Mr. Cleaver a public figure, and his cause was taken up around the world. In November 1968, he jumped bail and fled to Cuba, where he remained until 1969. Later, he traveled to Paris and then to Algeria. Mr. Cleaver spent much of his time feuding long-distance with Black Panther leader Huey Newton, who in 1971 expelled him from the party.

In time, relations between Mr. Cleaver and the Algerian government became strained, and he changed his political and religious convictions. He underwent a mystical conversion to Christianity, and came to believe that the socialist and Marxist systems he had witnessed in other countries failed to deliver on their promises.

Shortly before returning to the United States, he wrote in the New York Times: "With all of its faults, the American political system is the freest and most democratic in the world."

Bart Barnes

Eldridge Cleaver, political activist, born 1935; died May 1, 1998

Cyprus Talks Collapse

Kelly Couturier in Nicosia

U.S. ENVOY Richard C. Holbrooke last Sunday blamed a hardened stance by the Turkish Cypriots for the collapse of talks aimed at restarting reunification negotiations on this divided island.

"The reason we could not make progress this time around was because the Turkish side has changed its position," Holbrooke said in an exclusive interview after two days of talks with Turkish Cypriot leader Rauf Denktash and Glafcos Clerides, president of the Greek-Cypriot-led government.

But Holbrooke — the architect of the 1995 Dayton accords that ended the Bosnian conflict — said the United States would not "walk away" from the Cyprus problem. The U.S. engagement on Cyprus, where ethnic Greeks and Turks have been divided since the 1974 war, will continue, Holbrooke said, to prevent tensions from escalating.

He said two days of talks snagged when Denktash laid out two new conditions for restarting reunification negotiations: that the negotiations be carried out on a state-to-state basis and that Clerides withdraw the Republic of Cyprus's application to join the European Union.

The Turkish side's demand that the EU application be withdrawn was the "deal breaker," a source close to the talks said.

"The answer to the EU problem is not for Cyprus to withdraw its application, but for the EU to make Turkey a candidate as well," Holbrooke said. Washington has been critical of the European Union's decision last December to leave longtime aspiring member Turkey off its short list of candidates.

U.S. officials said privately they feared it would push Turkey and the Turkish Cypriots toward a harder line on Cyprus and other Greek-Turkish disputes. The European Union decided at the same December meeting to begin talks with the government of Cyprus on joining the EU.

Analysts said that the EU decisions and the resulting hardening stance in Turkish-ruled Northern Cyprus have brought the 24-year-old problem to a critical point.

"We are in a defining moment," one Western diplomat said. If Holbrooke's current effort "doesn't yield positive results, we may well have reached a point where the Cyprus problem can't be fixed any more," the diplomat said.

Holbrooke is the latest in a string of negotiators to attempt to mediate a solution to the longstanding problem. His mediation efforts last weekend — billed as his first big push on the issue — are part of a concerted U.S. effort to reduce tensions between Greece and Turkey, two NATO members that, as one U.S. official put it, have been "squabbling with each other in unseemly, provocative and dangerous ways."

Tensions have escalated over the planned delivery to the Greek Cypriot government late this summer of Russian S-300 surface-to-air missiles. Turkey, which maintains 35,000 troops in the northern part of the island, has said it may take action to prevent the deployment of the missiles. U.S. officials — including Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright, who is due in the region this month — are expected to continue diplomatic efforts to stop the missile delivery.

"We don't think the missiles should be delivered," Holbrooke said after the talks. "We think they're a bad idea."

Denktash warned of his side's hard line early in Holbrooke's shuttle diplomacy across the U.N. buffer zone that divides the island. He told reporters that in one of his early meetings with Holbrooke, he had told the envoy "we exist and we are going to exist as the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. If you want Cyprus to be united, two states are ready to unite. If not, let Cyprus be divided," the Turkish Cypriot leader said.

Only Turkey recognizes the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. The breakaway state was declared in the northern third of the island after a brief war in the summer of 1974 that was sparked by a Greek-backed coup and a Turkish military invasion.

Caught Between Defect and Perfect

Who will decide what is a good gene and what is a bad gene, asks **Jeremy Rifkin**

NBC recently aired a television adaptation of Aldous Huxley's classic novel about a genetically engineered future society. When Huxley wrote Brave New World in 1932, no one could have imagined that the scientific insights and technological know-how would exist by the end of this century that could make his vision real.

In March, many leading molecular biologists and geneticists met at the University of California at Los Angeles to discuss the prospect of making genetic changes in the human "germ line" — sperm and eggs — that would be passed on to future generations. The ability to alter genes before conception raises the possibility that we might be able to re-engineer our genetic blueprints and redirect the course of our biological evolution.

Curiously absent from the discussion, and the subsequent reporting of the event, was any mention of the word "eugenics." That term — conceived in the 19th century by Sir Francis Galton, Charles Darwin's cousin — is generally divided along two lines. Negative eugenics involves the systematic elimination of so-called undesirable biological traits. Positive eugenics is concerned with the use of selective breeding to "improve" the characteristics of an organism or species.

Because genetic-engineering technologies are by their nature eugenics tools, no thoughtful discussion of this revolution can occur without raising eugenics issues. Some might take offense at the idea that eugenics is built into the new technology. They prefer to equate eugenics with the Nazi experience.

But the new eugenics bears little resemblance to the shrill cries of racial purity that culminated in the Holocaust. The old eugenics was motivated by fear and hate; the new eugenics is spurred by market forces and consumer desire. Genetic engineering is coming to us not as a sinister plot, but rather as a social and economic boon.

The consequences of programming genetic changes into the human germ line are largely unpredictable and unknowable. Nonetheless, a growing number of molecular biologists, medical practitioners and pharmaceutical companies are eager to take the gamble, convinced that controlling our evolutionary destiny is humankind's next great social frontier. Their arguments are couched in terms of personal health, individual choice and collective responsibility for future generations.

Proponents of human genetic engineering argue that it would be cruel and irresponsible not to use this powerful new technology to eliminate serious "genetic disorders." Is it wrong, ask the molecular biologists, to want healthier babies? The problem with this argument is that once we begin repairing "defects" in the human germ line, there is no logical place to stop.

If diabetes, sickle-cell anemia and cancer are to be prevented by altering the genetic codes of individuals, why not proceed to other less serious "disorders" such as color blindness, dyslexia, obesity and short stature? In the end, why would we ever say no to any alteration that might enhance the well-being of our offspring?

With Americans already spending billions of dollars on cosmetic surgery to improve their looks and on psychotropic drugs to alter their moods, the use of genetic therapies to enhance unborn children hardly seems far-fetched.

Many advocates of germ-line intervention already see the potential benefits. They contend that the current debate over corrective measures to address serious illnesses is too limited and urge a more expansive discussion to include the advantage of enhancement therapy as well. The Economist magazine has suggested, in an editorial, that society needs to move beyond moralistic hand-wringing and embrace the new commercial eugenics opportunities that will soon become available. The new commercial eugenics, it argued, is about ensuring greater consumer freedom so that individuals can make of themselves and their heirs whatever they choose.



Woolly perspective . . . Dolly, the cloned sheep, with her lamb Bonnie. Genetic-engineering technologies raise troubling questions

While the notion of consumer choice would appear benign, the very idea of eliminating so-called genetic defects raises the troubling question of what is meant by the term "defective." Ethicist Daniel Callahan, of the Hastings Center, penetrates to the core of the issue when he observes that "behind the human horror at genetic defectiveness lurks . . . an image of the perfect human being. The very language of 'defect,' 'abnormality,' 'disease' and 'risk' presupposes such an image, a kind of prototype of perfection."

Do we then come to see ourselves as miswired from the get-go, riddled with errors in our genetic code? If that is the case, against what ideal norm are we to be measured? If every human being is made up of varying degrees of error, then we search in vain for the norm.

What makes the new language of molecular biology so subtly chilling is that it risks creating a new archetype, a flawless, errorless, perfect being to which to aspire — a new man and woman without the warts and wrinkles, vulnerabilities and frailties that have defined us from the beginning of our existence.

How tolerant is society likely to be of those whose "errors" go uncorrected? Will we empathize with those who are less than "perfect," or will we see them as "mistakes" that could have been avoided with proper engineering? Some genetic engineers believe that a future genetocracy is all but inevitable. Molecular biologist Lee Silver, of Princeton University, writes about a not-too-distant future of two biological classes, which he refers to as the "Gen Rich" and "Naturals." The Gen Rich — perhaps 10 percent of the population — include businessmen, musicians, artists, athletes and intellectuals who are society's elite. They have all been enhanced with specific synthetic genes that allow them to succeed in their fields in ways not conceivable among those born of nature's lottery.

While Silver acknowledges that the increasing polarization of society into Gen Rich and Natural classes might be unfair, he points out that wealthy parents have always been able to provide advantages for their children. "Anyone who accepts the right of affluent parents to provide their children with an expensive private school education cannot use unfairness as a reason for rejecting the use of reprogenetic technologies," argues Silver.

The new genetic-engineering technologies raise one of the most troubling political questions in human history: To whom would we entrust the authority to decide what is a good gene and what is a bad gene? The government? Corporations? The scientific community? If, however, we were asked whether we would sanction new bio-engineered products that could enhance the physical and emotional well-being of our progeny, many of us would not hesitate to add our support.

Many of us will be eager to take advantage of the new gene therapies — both for ourselves and our offspring — if they deliver on their promise to enhance our physical, emotional and mental health.

The problem is that biotechnology has a distinct beginning but no clear end. In the decades to come, we might well barter ourselves away, a gene at a time, in exchange for some measure of temporary well-being.

In the long run, the personal and collective security we have fought so hard to preserve may well be irreversibly compromised in our pursuit of engineered perfection.

Jeremy Rifkin is author of The Biotech Century: Harnessing the Gene and Remaking the World (Tarcher/Putnam, 1998)

New Yorkers Not Cheering Stadium Plan

Blaine Harden in New York

LABELING himself "a leader, not a panderer," Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani is insisting that he will never allow his beloved New York Yankees to skip off to New Jersey or any such hinterland in search of a better stadium.

What set off the mayoral chest-thumping was 500 pounds of pre-game bother at Yankee Stadium on April 13. A steel expansion joint fell from an upper deck, mashing an empty seat and closing The House That Ruth Built for a few weeks. It also sent the mayor and his friend, Yankee owner George Steinbrenner, into paroxysms of complaint about the structural integrity of what is considered by many as America's most celebrated ballpark.

To keep the Yankees, Giuliani has proclaimed himself the leader of an effort to build a new stadium in Manhattan. So far, however, not much of a crowd is lining up to follow hizzoner's lead.

A surprisingly large number of New York sports fans, local politicians, economists, long-time Giuliani backers and even the hinterlanders of New Jersey do not want to shell out hundreds of millions of public dollars for Steinbrenner's hugely profitable franchise. One of Babe Ruth's granddaughters, Linda Ruth Tosetti, said the Sultan of Swat would be "devastated and heartbroken" if the Yankees moved.

After the most thorough engineering inspection in its 75-year history and some minor repairs, it turns out that Yankee Stadium is in sound structural shape. In the words of one engineer, the stadium, which underwent a $110 million renovation in the early 1970s, can stand "forever."

This is destabilizing news for Steinbrenner. The falling chunk of stadium had given him a card he never had before: public safety. It supported his decade-old threat to jerk his fabled team out of the low-income Bronx. He has said he will spirit the Yankees off to Jersey or elsewhere unless New York City builds for him what other American cities have built for other millionaire team owners: a new stadium with high-profit skyboxes for corporate fat cats.

Steinbrenner covets a deal that would put a new stadium on the pricey West Side of Manhattan, at a cost of more than $1 billion, most of it to be financed by taxpayers. Although Giuliani claims he is emotionally committed to keeping the Yankees in the Bronx, he says that if it takes Manhattan to satisfy Steinbrenner, then so be it.

To that end, the Republican mayor — who often boasts about trimming city government and cutting the nation's highest city tax burden — proposed that a commercial tax scheduled to be phased out should instead be kept on the books. Giuliani wants to use it to raise $600 million in seed money for a Manhattan stadium, as well as for a new stadium for the Mets in Queens. The mayor said the tax would have no effect on the poor, touching "relatively large to gigantic businesses."

His soak-the-rich approach to stadium finance, however, has fallen on unsympathetic ears in the City Council, which must approve the idea. City Council Speaker Peter Vallone, a Democrat running for governor, demands that the plan be approved first by voters in a city-wide referendum. Polls show that four out of five New Yorkers want Yankee Stadium to stay put in the Bronx.

Moreover, doubters are lining up to discredit a new City Hall projection that a stadium in Manhattan would generate $1 billion a year for the city's economy. A KPMG Peat Marwick study two years ago said the stadium would generate one-tenth of that amount. The study, which was partially paid for by the city, also said that a refurbished stadium in the Bronx would generate nearly as much revenue as a Manhattan stadium, but with less than half the capital investment.

Such numbers dismay even champions of Giuliani: "We think he has been just a great mayor, but why should taxpayers of New York be building a stadium for a private entrepreneur?" asks Myron Magnet, editor of City Journal, a magazine put out by the Manhattan Institute, often described as the think tank where Giuliani gets his ideas.

Another setback to the mayor's Yankee-saving crusade has come from across the Hudson River. A Quinnipiac College poll taken after the chunk of steel fell in the Bronx found that only 27 percent of New Jersey residents want the Yankees to move to their state.

Ireland's First Lady

Peter Finn

MARY ROBINSON
A Woman of Ireland and the World
By John Horgan
Roberts Rinehart. 224 pp. $22.95

IRELAND, in the 1990s, has reinvented itself, and what fun the old *cailin* is having. An exile returning home and inquiring as to the whereabouts of some old stalwarts elicits that you-poor-dear look. Post-colonial malaise, you ask? Sorry, killed by self-confidence. The Catholic Church? In therapy, poor thing, but may write a memoir. Nationalism? Passe, darling; by the way, you must meet Gerry! Traditional culture? Let me give you its agent's number.

And, finally, one asks, are you still slavishly devoted to narrow, conservative party politics? Two words, stranger: Mary Robinson.

Of the many things that a new Ireland embraced in the go-go '90s, among the most fascinating was the Mary Robinson phenomenon. An obscure, earnest liberal, Robinson was thrust into the Irish Presidency in 1990 when the so-called Celtic Tiger was beginning to stir in its lair. Whip-smart and poised, she seemed the personification of the nation's newfound vigor.

Anyone coming to John Horgan's Mary Robinson: A Woman of Ireland and the World for a full biographical treatment of Ireland's first female president, and now the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, is likely to be disappointed. Despite the fulsomeness of the title, this is a narrowly focused, albeit very well-executed study of Robinson's political history. Considerations of her family background, her personal life, her personality are mere asides to Horgan's recapitulation of her public record.

The Irish presidency, at first blush, seems like the most unlikely of places from which to project the derring-do of a nation on the move. It was, pre-Robinson, the velvet coffin of Irish politics. The office has almost no power, which rests instead with parliament, and Irish political males of a certain stature migrated there to wear top hats, cut ribbons and ossify.

Robinson, the first female president, was a very different creature. A longtime member of the Irish Senate, a body that rivals the presidency in the Irish system for sheer powerlessness, she spent her life advocating for contraception, divorce, gay rights, women's rights, among various causes that at various times have seemed utterly lost. To be fair, as a gifted constitutional lawyer but not as a politician, she did force some social change in Ireland in the 1970s and 1980s.

By the late 1980s, Robinson's political career looked spent. She had never succeeded in getting elected to the lower house of parliament, the Dail, where political power is exercised in Ireland. In 1985, she left the Labour Party in a dispute over policy towards Northern Ireland. Her future, it seemed, lay in the law.

But the Labour Party approached her to run in the race for the Irish presidency in 1990, an effort that seemed wholly quixotic. Irish presidents through the history of the state were of two kinds: members of the dominant Fianna Fail political party who were elected, or candidates selected by Fianna Fail and agreed to by the other parties. The Irish constitution allows the major parties to simply pick a president, forestalling the need for an election.


Mary Robinson, a phenomenon of the new Ireland PHOTO: EAMONN FARRELL

Robinson seemed content to be a valiant loser, a totem of liberalism's small progress. However, her principal opponent, the Fianna Fail candidate, blundered big time by appearing to lie publicly, and Robinson capitalized on his blustering excuses. Whether she could have won the election without the sorry faux pas of her opponent, I doubt. Horgan, a Robinson cheerleader throughout the book, seems to believe otherwise and thinks that the way she galvanized women voters across party lines would have carried her into office.

In any case, whether her election was accidental or inevitable, Robinson, as president, proved herself a perfect conduit for the country's expansive mood. Her stint in office was a kind of Camelot for Irish liberalism; but instead of allowing a galaxy of stars to enter the presidential mansion, she opened the house in the Phoenix Park to the downtrodden and the previously ignored.

Even when she offended elements in the national elite — as for instance when she shook hands with Gerry Adams, president of Sinn Fein, the IRA's political wing — she merely prefigured their ultimate acceptance into polite society. By the end, when she left office last year, her approval ratings were so high they were of another order in Irish political life. Seeking a little bit of that magic, the godfathers of the major political parties felt they had no choice but to put forward women to replace her. Imitation, it seems, is the most paternal form of flattery.

Big Brother Takes on the Bad Boys

Thomas W. Lippman

ROGUE REGIMES
Terrorism and Proliferation
By Raymond Tanter
St. Martin's. 331 pp. $29.95

BEFORE the 1980 presidential election, a group of Republican foreign policy experts met with their candidate, Ronald Reagan, to brief him on strategic issues in the Persian Gulf, where war had broken out between Iran and Iraq. As described by Raymond Tanter, who participated in that session and later served on Reagan's National Security Council staff, the meeting evolved into a contest for Reagan's approbation between Henry Kissinger and Alexander Haig. Much to Tanter's satisfaction, Haig won: "The bottom line of [Kissinger's] exposure to candidate Reagan . . . was that the president-elect asked Haig to be Secretary of State, and Kissinger did not receive an offer to join the new administration."

Tanter's catty account of that briefing, peppered with potshots at Kissinger, is perhaps the most interesting part of Rogue Regimes. Unfortunately, it has little to do with the main thrust of this book, which is an effort to analyze why outlaw countries behave as they do and how the United States responds to them.

This is a subject worth exploring, especially in light of recent developments in the confrontation with Iraq and of the calls for reevaluation of U.S. relations with Cuba after the pope's visit there. Tanter, now a professor at the University of Michigan, has some useful contributions to offer, especially in his accounts of how the Washington foreign policy bureaucracy actually operates when forced to make difficult decisions. But the value of his work is limited by the form, which is mostly descriptive rather than prescriptive; by turgid, formulaic writing; and by dubious assertions that undermine the authority of his analysis.

Tanter states as a fact, for example, that by 1997 "Iraq was in virtual compliance with international demands to destroy its weapons of mass destruction and to allow inspections, yet retribution justified continuation of sanctions to right the initial wrong," which was the 1990 invasion of Kuwait. This flies in the face of virtually every report from the U.N. inspection teams in Iraq, which have documented systematic Iraqi efforts to foil the inspectors and conceal illegal weapons.

He reports without offering evidence that North Korean leader Kim Jong-Il blamed his father for the death of his mother and that therefore "an argument can be made that he is still that little frightened boy who is lashing out at the world." He suggests that Cuban leader Fidel Castro was motivated to revolution by the secret knowledge that he was not a good enough baseball player to make the grade in the U.S. major leagues. And he refers to the differences between Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan and most mainstream black politicians over policy toward Nigeria as a "split within the liberal coalition." Who believes that Louis Farrakhan is part of any "liberal coalition" in American politics?

Tanter asserts that the American propensity for imposing diplomatic and economic sanctions on regimes with which Washington is unhappy originates in the belief of U.S. presidents that "they have a virtual fiduciary responsibility to change the behavior of foreign leaders, that is, to rehabilitate them. This tradition derives from the idea that occupants of the Oval Office have a right to sit in judgment over, and change the behavior of, their counterparts abroad."

His analysis implies that Washington imposed embargoes and sanctions on Iraq, North Korea and other "rogue regimes" out of some missionary zeal to improve the world; but in reality the United States acted against these countries in response to reprehensible behavior. Iraq invaded Kuwait; Libya invaded Chad and blew up an American jetliner; Iran took U.S. diplomats hostage. Such actions required appropriate responses from Washington.

Tanter evaluates the history and current state of U.S. relations with six countries that have made life difficult for a succession of presidents: Iran, Iraq, Libya, Syria, Cuba and North Korea. Wisely, he offers no across-the-board formula for dealing with them, because their motivations are different, as is their troublemaking potential. Instead, he examines the Washington decision-making process to see how U.S. responses to those regimes were developed.

These are the most illuminating sections of the book. Tanter explains the complex interplay of forces — lobbyists, ethnic groups, the business community, defense contractors, professional diplomats, academics, Congress, the military and plain old ego — that influence a decision to strike an offending regime militarily, impose sanctions or do nothing. Anyone who claimed to offer a simple, straightforward solution to the Saddam Hussein problem during the latest showdown with Iraq should be required to read Tanter's inside account of the Reagan administration's internal debate over whether to impose sanctions on Libya in 1982.

"One of the principles of the politics of policymaking," Tanter shrewdly observes, "is that if you think opponents are going to slow down the momentum toward a preferred option of the group, be sure to exclude them from the meeting."

In the case of Libya, Tanter writes, "because the Export Administration Act required consultation with allies, the Department of Justice was very concerned that consultation, in fact, be carried out." How inconvenient: The Justice Department wanted to uphold the law. As a result Justice was excluded from key meetings until renegade CIA agent Edwin Wilson surfaced in Libya. Because a high-profile crime had been committed, Justice became an important player.

Whether or not the reader shares his partisan point of view, Tanter's accounts of the infighting offer illuminating insights into the decision-making process. In short, we see the sausage being made, and it is not entirely appetizing.

Paperbacks
Nonfiction

Shackleton, by Roland Huntford (Carroll & Graf, $18.95)

ROLAND Huntford is an Englishman with a passion for the poles and those who explore them. His books include Scott and Amundsen, which debunks the legend of the valiant Englishman and praises the methodical Norwegian; and this strapping life of the great British adventurer. Ernest Shackleton wins Huntford's admiration because he had the sense to scuttle an expedition rather than risk the lives of the men he commanded. Even when he failed to reach the South Pole, he triumphed in England (as did Scott) as a "splendid failure." In Huntford's words, during the course of his 1907-09 expedition, he "had the right kind of adventures: terrible (if really unnecessary) suffering; hairbreadth escapes, a near miss, a happy ending by the skin of his teeth."

Women's Life and Work in the Southern Colonies, by Julia Cherry Spruill (Norton, $14.95)

JULIA Cherry Spruill, born 1899 in North Carolina, got interested in Southern women's history in the 1920s but faced a lack of secondary sources, and so her pioneering research focused on primary material: "As she searched," writes Anne Firor Scott in her introduction, "she examined . . . parish records, court minutes, ... records, contemporary accounts, inventories, wills, guardian bonds, letter books, colonial newspapers." Spruill's social history examines every facet of women's lives during the colonial era: schooling, courtship and marriage, domestic duties (and escapes from them), dress and decorum, women's role in public affairs and their legal status.

Mad Amadeus Sued a Madam, by Allan Miller; Illustrated by Lee Lorenz (Godine, $10.01)

PALINDROMES are words or phrases that read the same forwards and backwards, and they stand high among the more refined forms of wordplay. As Roger Ang... says in his introduction to this collection, "One doesn't write or invent a palindrome; one hunts it down, sometimes following a dwindling spoor over a period of hours, days, nights, and weeks." In his hunt, Allan Miller has discovered such charmers as "On a limo to Milan," "Elf Farm Raffle," and "A ham, a y... a Yamaha." In his afterword, Miller laments that he had to leave out some of his favorites because they appeared in other books; he particularly laments the loss of "gnu dung." Lee Lorenz, a legendary New Yorker artist, illustrates many of these ... pages, giving pictorial twists of his own to these phrases.

Hungry Ghosts: Mao's Secret Famine, by Jasper Becker (Henry Holt, $14.95)

BETWEEN 1958 and 1962, following Mao's Great Leap Forward, more than 30 million people starved to death in China. How could it happen? What was it like for the peasants forced into collective farming, who bore the brunt of the famine? Jasper Becker, now the South China Morning Post's Beijing bureau chief, combines a political and historical analysis with appalling stories of the miseries inflicted on ordinary Chinese people.

Cool Britannia is contributing to a large influx of young European students, says **Mark Whitehead**

Channel hopping

ALONG with the politicians, business people and tourists taking advantage of quicker and cheaper travel between Britain and continental Europe, a new category of traveller is emerging. Every year, more and more youngsters make regular trips across the Channel to attend British independent schools.

The latest figures from the Independent Schools Information Service (ISIS), published last month in its annual census, show a continuing upward trend. In the the 12 months to January, more than 2,400 pupils arrived at British independent schools from Europe, an increase of 2.6 per cent on the previous year.

Continental Europe now provides the most significant area of growth in foreign pupils and there seems little likelihood of the trend slowing down. Mainland Europeans now constitute almost a third of new foreign pupils in the independent education sector.

This contrasts with the overall picture that has seen the total number of foreign pupils fall sharply in the last year, accounted for, according to ISIS, mainly by a drop in numbers from the Far East and Southeast Asia. Economic turmoil in these regions has cut the value of several currencies and hit the ability of many families to send their children abroad for their education.

The situation may well change and recruitment of pupils from the East return to previous levels; meanwhile many independent schools are concentrating now on Europe.

By nationality, the biggest group of young Europeans travelling to British schools is the Germans, followed by youngsters from Russia, France and Spain. Others come mainly from Eastern Europe and Scandinavia.

With closer links between the UK and its European Union partners, says ISIS, there has never been a better time for youngsters wanting to come to the UK for at least part of their schooling. And with Cool Britannia now officially on the map — it has always been pretty cool in the minds of young Europeans — there is no shortage of volunteers to take the opportunity to improve their English and learn about the British way of life.

William Winfield, head of Mill Hill School in northwest London, is well aware that Britain is seen as the place to be. "We have surprisingly good credibility at the moment," he says. "There's always been an attraction about London ever since the days of Carnaby Street, and Britain is thought of as a good country to go to. The older ones love going into London to the shops. And they get to speak English, which is seen increasingly as the lingua franca of Europe."

Boarding party . . . the social aspect benefits both foreign and British students PHOTO: NIGEL DICKINSON

Mill Hill has 25 boarding pupils on its European Initiative from Germany, France and Spain, Albania, Russia, Ukraine and Bulgaria. Last year it won the European Curriculum Award from the Central Bureau and Council of Europe. It operates an extensive work experience exchange scheme with linked schools in Germany, France and Spain, and many of its European pupils go on to British universities after their A levels.

Anna-Lena Duerks, aged 17, from Hamburg, Germany, is taking English Literature, French, Business Studies and German A levels at Mill Hill and seems to be enjoying every minute of it. "I used to read about English boarding schools as a child and always wanted to go to one," she says. "It's not like it was in the story books now, but the atmosphere is great and my teachers here are more like friends than in Germany. It's a lot of fun."

John Towey, a former RAF wing commander who now heads ISIS International, the branch of the information service which deals with overseas pupils, says the increase in the number of Europeans began around five years ago when many schools realised it would be a good idea to develop relations with Britain's EU partners.

The excellent academic reputation enjoyed by British schools, their expertise in English language teaching, the value of the "boarding experience" and the prospect of top A level grades for entry into highly-regarded British universities are among the factors attracting foreign pupils, says Mr Towey.

"And there are big advantages for the English children meeting others from abroad. Children are naturally curious and it's a good way for them to learn about each other's culture. Many of these children are future leaders and this is a good way for them to expand their horizons."

Ardingly College in Haywards Heath, West Sussex, 15 minutes from Gatwick airport, aims to provide a tailored introduction to English language and culture for youngsters from Europe. The English for Young Europeans programme began seven years ago with a handful of pupils and has grown steadily ever since.

Gesa Paulfeierborn, marketing and European co-ordinator, says the programme started as a result of a conscious decision by the school to expand its intake. "The British education system has a very good reputation in Europe," she says. "People realise that it develops the whole person. It's not just about academic excellence, although that's an important part of it."

For further information, contact ISIS at 56 Buckingham Gate, London SW1E 6AG, or telephone (+44) 171-630 8793

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The Guardian Weekly





Big bang sounds for Scottish science

Tim Radford

SCOTTISH science is looking up, and not just because the Government's astronomers in Cambridge are being transferred to Edinburgh.

Last week a team from Dundee, Edinburgh and Glasgow hit the headlines with the identification of a single lung cancer gene. Earlier this year the closure of the Royal Greenwich Observatory in Cambridge was finally announced, and the expertise will be now concentrated instead at the Royal Observatory, Edinburgh.

Last year the Roslin Institute in Scotland and its neighbour, PPL Therapeutics, made history when it produced Dolly, the first sheep to be cloned from an adult cell, and confirmed that it led the world in genetic engineering of animals to provide human pharmaceutical proteins.

The Scottish Science Trust has an ambitious $140 million plan to create and develop six science discovery centres across Scotland. Glasgow already has one on the way.

There are plans for big things in Dundee ("Scotland's City of Discovery"), Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Inverness and Orkney. Science projects involving people rather than just providing a spectacle are planned: a goal that might not be too difficult to reach given the record number of visitors to the Edinburgh International Science Festival, which ended last month.

Nobody is very surprised. Steven Rose, a neuroscientist and professor at the Open University, who is active in the public debate about the use and misuse of science, said he thought Edinburgh audiences were "very serious", perhaps because of the healthier state of the Scottish educational system.

"Some years ago we ran a series of after-work meetings at the festival on the philosophy of science. I wasn't sure that anyone would attend, especially as they had to pay for entrance," he said. "But the meetings I chaired were packed." Another scientist said: "You could never run that sort of event in London; it would probably be packed with loonies."

There is nothing especially national about science. There are Scottish scientists heading research centres in England, Europe and America, and English and American scientists making the running in Scotland. But there is an unusual concentration of expertise north of the border.

The Natural Environment Research Council's sea mammals research unit — the experts on seals, whales and dolphins — has moved from Cambridge to St Andrews. When alarm began to grow about the links between mad cow disease (BSE) and its human variant, the Government established its CJD surveillance unit not in Cambridge or London but in Edinburgh.

The Medical Research Council has its human genetics research unit in Edinburgh. Britain's geophysicists have made it their home: it is the centre for monitoring not just British earthquakes but world-wide seismic events.



Ian Wilmut, team leader at the Roslin Institute PHOTO: MURDO MACLEOD

And Edinburgh's science anyway has a unique place in world fiction. The young Arthur Conan Doyle trained there. He always claimed that his model for Sherlock Holmes was Joseph Bell, surgeon at the Edinburgh Infirmary. Conan Doyle never forgot a diagnosis where Dr Bell told a patient that he was a non-commissioned soldier, not long discharged from a Highland regiment, having served in Barbados.

"You see, gentlemen," Dr Bell told his students, "the man was respectful but he did not remove his hat. They do not in the army, but he would have learned civilian ways had he been long discharged. He has an air of authority and he is obviously Scottish. As to Barbados, his complaint is elephantiasis, which is West Indian and not British."

It's not just fiction that has concentrated on Scotland. History has produced a startling crop of Scots-born giants. James Clerk Maxwell's equations made possible the work of Einstein. James Hutton's principle of uniformitarianism (whatever happens now was always happening) made possible a new understanding of Earth history, and opened the way for Charles Darwin.

John Napier, who invented logarithms and set mathematics in a different direction, was born near Edinburgh. Sir Alexander Fleming, the first to spot the importance of penicillin, was from Ayrshire.

James Lind, an 18th century surgeon, noticed that sailors who ate citrus fruits failed to get scurvy, a disease of vitamin C deficiency. He passed the work to Captain Cook. In those days up to a third of a ship's crew would fall ill on the first leg of the voyage: Cook, testing the theory, took a crew round the world on his second voyage, losing only four men. Thereafter, the Royal Navy drank lime juice — and the British became limeys.

James Watt, who invented the steam engine, the condenser, and units of horsepower, came from Greenock. John McAdam, who produced tarmacadam for the roads, came from Ayr. John Logie Baird, father of television, came from Dumbartonshire, while that other great communicator, Alexander Graham Bell, was an Edinburgh man.

John Durant is professor of the public understanding of science at the Science Museum and Imperial College. He has so far not detected any particular difference in attitudes to science between English and Scottish populations. But he suspects there may be one; there was a long tradition of respect for learning in Scotland.

Prof Durant said: "There was the Scottish Enlightenment in the 18th century, when the Scots had closer intellectual links with the Continent than with England. Nobody has ever heard of an English Enlightenment because there wasn't one.

"There is a strong sense of a fundamentally different mindset there. Whether you can trace that to observable attitudes on the ground to particular issues is much less clear. I cannot honestly say the Scots are more gung-ho about biotechnology or more enthusiastic about fundamental research."

CLASSIFIED

CAR HIRE

PROPERTY

Gitta Sereny, author of a controversial new book about the life of the child killer Mary Bell, is no stranger to controversy, as **Giles Foden** reports

Truth to sell

A *YEAR* or so ago literary journalists were talking in hushed tones about "the secret" of Gitta Sereny's next book. The paperback of her acclaimed biography of Hitler's technocrat, Albert Speer: His Battle With Truth, had just been published and her star had never been higher.

Only a few people at publishers Macmillan knew the truth — that the distinguished investigative journalist and author was going back over old ground. In 1972 Sereny published The Case Of Mary Bell, which told the story of the 11-year-old Tyneside girl's conviction in 1968 for the murder of two boys. Martin Brown, aged four, was strangled and Brian Howe, aged three, asphyxiated.

In the new book Sereny attempts to go beyond the brute facts of the case, to understand the psychological trauma that drove the daughter of a Newcastle prostitute and alcoholic petty criminal to murder.

Put like that, it seems a noble ambition, representing just one element in a fiercely pursued wider project of Sereny's — to locate the origins of evil in society and particular individual histories, rather than (as happened when the Bell case first came under scrutiny and, more recently, with the Jamie Bulger murder) in a medieval notion of original sin.

But the fact that Bell — released in 1980 and now in hiding from tabloid journalists despite the protection of an assumed name — was paid thousands of pounds for her collaboration in the new book has caused controversy because of the law that prevents convicted criminals profiting from their crimes. The Home Secretary, Jack Straw, has called an inquiry into the case.

Sereny has long been used to accusations of exploitation. Given her subject matter, this is not at all surprising. As well as biographies of Speer and Franz Stangl, who was commandant of the Treblinka death camp, she has written a 20,000-word investigation of the Bulger case, numerous in-depth murder investigations for quality broadsheets and magazines, and analyses of contemporary neo-Nazism.

Sereny was born in Vienna in the 1920s: the date seems to be kept deliberately vague, but by most accounts she is 74. Her family were Anglophile, Hungarian landowners — not Jewish. Owing to her father's love of the English, she attended a boarding-school in Kent during her early youth. It was there, extraordinarily, that she read Hitler's Mein Kampf.

By the age of 14 she was back in Vienna permanently, studying to be an actress and, *inter alia*, hearing Hitler make speeches to adoring crowds in the mid-1930s. By then, as she has written, "I had become terribly, achingly aware of wrong, wrong in my small world and in the world beyond it." She saw the disappearance of Jews gather pace and knew then that she too — for her own reasons — had to get out.

Sereny ran away to London, and then Paris, where she briefly attended acting school before the outbreak of war. Working as a nurse caring for abandoned children, she



Sereny: self-effacing, but forceful in conversation PHOTO: FRANK MARTIN

became active in anti-Nazi circles. Warned of impending arrest by a German officer, she was able to escape — over the Pyrenees in her nurse's uniform — to Spain and, eventually, the United States.

After the war she returned to Europe as a child welfare officer working for the United Nations: her first assignment was the care of child prisoners from Dachau. By 1948 she had married an American, Vogue photographer Don Honeyman, and after stints in New York and Paris moved with him in 1958 to London, where she still lives. She was by then already working as a journalist — one who was, as she has put it, "passionately interested in two subjects: the Third Reich and troubled children".

That interest is unabated, to the extent that she will put herself as close to those subjects as she possibly can. For both the biography of Speer and Into That Darkness, the book on Stangl, Sereny had unprecedented access to her subjects. She attended the Bulger trial and now has interviewed Bell at length.

Some commentators believe that closeness has distorted Sereny's moral perspective. "I think Gitta Sereny is confused when it comes to the issue of moral blame," says Andrew O'Hagan, himself author of The Missing, a personal account of violence and murder in Britain. "She found it very easy to empathise with Albert Speer, she found it quite easy to enter into complicity with Mary Bell in her more self-redeeming aspects — but not at all empathetic or forgiving with the mothers of the Liverpool boys who murdered Jamie Bulger, making no allowance for the economic and social horror of their lives."

Some will offer (partial) corrections to the view that, in the case of Bell revisited, Sereny has flown too close to the flame. As Ian Jack, who has edited her for Granta magazine, puts it: "In her position, as a writer, it would be difficult to avoid doing the same thing. But it's a hard thing to justify on any higher level except that of writing. Writers write, that's what they do — in that sense it's an amoral activity."

Is it? That is the question that will exercise reviewers of Cries Unheard when it is published in Britain this week. It is one that has exercised many writers previously, from W B Yeats, Seamus Heaney and Paul Muldoon (the Troubles) to Primo Levi, Elie Weisel and Geoffrey Hill (The Holocaust). What marks out the current furore is its very British domesticity — the fact that the parents of Bell's victims are still alive and feeling the pain she so irrevocably caused.

Whether Sereny's virtues as a writer, for which many editors and thousands of readers will vouch — her tough wisdom, scrupulous handling of fact and careful modulation of her relationship with principal interviewee — will see her through in Cries Unheard remains to be seen.

One thing is certain — you needn't only read the books to feel it — that every time she goes "into that darkness", Sereny is as aware as her opponents of the responsibilities which the journey entails. Now as the titles of those books come back to haunt her, you can be sure that Sereny will have her own "battle with truth".

Cries Unheard is published by Macmillan at £20

Why men are still on top

Linda Grant on a sad judgment day for women

THE written history of the sexual revolution goes something like this: until the sixties, there was a powerful taboo on pre-marital sex for women which was broken by a combination of more liberal social attitudes and the availability of abortion and oral contraception. In theory this meant that women now had the freedom to say yes to any sexual offer.

They could take pleasure in their bodies without fear of pregnancy or social disapproval. They could openly discuss and demand sexual practices that earlier generations could only learn of through prostitutes or certain banned pornographic texts, such as Henry Miller's The Tropic Of Cancer.

Women were seen by men and by themselves to be sexually available and any refusal could only be attributed — by men — to prudishness or frigidity. But by the seventies, there was a growing feminist disquiet about the sexual revolution. Where, the women's movement asked, was the freedom to say no? By the early eighties there was a backlash against sex. The sexual revolution came to be regarded as a brief interval between the invention of the Pill and the arrival of Aids.

Yet sexuality did not entirely go away as the energy surrounding it moved off in pursuit of money. It took new and unusual forms as safe-sex techniques, derived from sadomasochism, entered a kind of stylistic mainstream which saw teenage fans of Madonna queueing outside record stores for the first available copies of her "book", Sex. Finally, when it became clear that there was not going to be the massive epidemic of Aids-related deaths among non-drug-using heterosexuals that had been predicted, we moved on to Girl Power.

Girl Power's genesis did not begin with the Spice Girls, but was an organic development out of such factors as the first male strip entourages — the Dream Boys followed by the Chippendales — who arrived in Britain in the early nineties, around the same time as a renewed attempt to sell pornographic magazines for women. These failed for any number of reasons, partly because they were kept on the top shelf, where women weren't accustomed to look for their reading matter. The top shelf was an all-male zone they had no interest in conquering.

The stuff needed to be in the place in the newsagent where women were looking already, among the copies of Woman's Own and Cosmopolitan, which a quarter of a century before had apparently invented a new type of sexually active woman. The traditional women's magazine market (with titles such as Company and the even younger readership-targeted, Sugar) did this a second time, with the New Lad equivalent, the sexually raunchy girl, on the prowl with her condoms, bare midriff and navel ring.

And yet, it now seems, this history of the sexual revolution describes mere phenomena of culture and has very little bearing on how real, flesh-and-blood women live their lives. A report published last week studied young women over the course of 10 years. Carried out not by a rightwing think-tank but by four feminist sociologists, it finds that exactly the same attitudes to sex prevail as did 30 years ago.

Girls who sleep around are still labelled as sluts — by girls themselves as well as boys. Girls still have sex when they don't want it (a proof, if ever there was one, of what date rape really is about: not boys refusing to take no for an answer but girls being too polite or unassertive to say no).

Until the seventies, the word gender was confined to discussions of grammar. Go into a bookshop now and you will find shelf after shelf of books discussing this gender business, which is an academic way of talking about an apparent meltdown of masculinity and femininity. There will be books of queer politics that try to demolish traditional ideas of what a man and a woman is; there will be others that don't even accept that there are any significant differences between men and women except the arbitrary rules imposed by society; there will be manuals on gender reassignment.

You will come to think that men and women are in a state of dynamic flux, that we are discarding the sexual roles that have existed for the whole of our biological history and that there are tens of thousands of academics studying this profound alteration, and on that latter score you would be right.

Then you might pick up a new report, "The Male in the Head: Young People, Heterosexuality and Power", and find that gender politics is just an idea among intellectuals who have read too much Foucault. The real gender-bending is the one implied in the authors' title. Young women continue to view sexuality through a male mind-set. Consider the assertion that must have seen close to a century's service — that having sex with a condom is like chewing a toffee with the paper on.

What does it mean? It tells you that there is a reduction in sensitivity of the penis. What does that imply? That it is likely to take a man longer to reach climax. Why is this in any way a disadvantage, from a female perspective? And why does the inconvenience of the use of a condom apparently dwarf to insignificance the experience of being given an anaesthetic to have one's uterus scraped or aspirated out? For the refusal of men to use condoms, combined with some recent Pill scares, have contributed to the rise in the numbers of abortions.

The great change that has taken place in the past 30 years has been the removal of the taboo on pre-marital sex. The survey found that this really had been demolished. You could have sex, just not too much of it. What this seems to mean is that a single, small alteration in social attitudes towards women and sex occurred, in which men decided that it was to their advantage to have women who would sleep with them outside marriage but that they would continue to decide who, in the old terminology, was "respectable". Men would say who was a slapper and who was the girl next door. Who had the power? They did.

Women in Britain are observably doing better than men in many fields in which they barely had any presence before 1960. They run financial institutions. They negotiate peace in Northern Ireland. What we have now is a bizarre reversal of what has existed for so long — women powerful outside the home in the world of work, yet still bound by male conventions in the bedroom.

The male gaze and the judgments it makes continue to define who a woman is or what she must be. Feminism was always about asking who makes the rules, as well as about breaking them. If it had to set up alternative systems in which rules made by women could operate, like the women's banks of the early seventies. But break the rule that says that nice girls don't sleep around and you will find no alternative, feminist-dominated heterosexual reality to shelter you.

Fear of breathing at 35,000 ft

Airlines have long realised that recirculating air saves fuel but at what cost to passengers and crew, asks **David Newnham**

RUNNY nose, annoying cough and a sore throat that won't go away? Time was when your doctor would recommend a good holiday. But today, the question "When were you last on an aeroplane?" is more likely to pinpoint the source of an infection than suggest a cure.

The practice of recirculating cabin air in order to cut fuel costs is being increasingly blamed for spreading diseases among airline passengers and crew — diseases ranging from severe gastro-intestinal infections that have struck down 200 at a time to drug-resistant strains of tuberculosis that only respond to the most prolonged and unpleasant courses of treatment.

Yet despite a growing awareness among passengers, flight attendants and health professionals that inadequate ventilation can damage the health of anyone who spends more than a few hours in a plane, airlines and their regulators worldwide seem reluctant to grant air quality higher status on their safety agenda.

So great is the concern with lack of regulation and what many see as a culture of secretiveness within the industry that a British charity organisation now proposes to challenge airlines to adopt a common set of standards and to open themselves up to independent scrutiny.

The Oxford-based Aviation Health Institute (AHI), whose executive council includes representatives from British Petroleum, Bupa, Marks & Spencer, Merrill Lynch, National Westminster Bank, and the Royal Air Force, hopes to persuade companies to use top-quality air as a selling point, much as they now boast about leg-room, fine wines or metal cutlery. The aim is to harness the competitive forces that many believe have been responsible for driving down the quality of cabin air since the oil crisis of the late 1970s.

It is a paradox of air travel that the older the aircraft, the fresher the air. Planes such as the Concorde and the Boeing 737-200 rely for their ventilation entirely on fresh air drawn through the engines, ducted into the front of the cabin and expelled at the rear end. This air is extremely dry, which has its own health implications but at least it ensures the aircraft free from micro-organisms, and passengers can counteract the dryness by drinking water. What's more, in these older planes, the cabin air is completely replaced every three minutes.

Diverting air in this way, however, reduces the efficiency of the engines by up to 2 per cent, and for this reason, airlines reacted to the threat of dearer fuel 20 years ago by ordering aircraft with a ventilation system in which half of the air in the cabin is simply filtered, mixed with fresh air and recirculated. The result is a 50-50 blend of fresh and used air — the latter containing less oxygen and more carbon dioxide, in addition to any particles and organisms that may not have been trapped by the filters.

It is the commercial pressure on airlines to stretch this 50-50 ratio of fresh and recirculated air even further, and the limitations of official controls, that worries Farrol Kahn, director of the AHI. At present, only the concentration of carbon dioxide in cabin air is controlled by law, and Kahn believes the temptation to move from 50 per cent to 55 or even 60 per cent recirculated air is enormous. "Everyone is doing it. If you look at your bottom line and you have to cut millions of pounds off operating expenses, you sit there and think, well maybe next year we can push it to 65 per cent stale air."

Kahn believes that airline pilots — whose air supply is of a much higher quality, partly for the benefit of the electronic equipment in the cockpit — can be under indirect pressure to decrease the level of air conditioning in the cabin during a flight. "They don't give the pilots written instructions saying, 'You will ventilate the air every 12 minutes instead of every three,' and so on. They simply say, 'Guys, we need to cut costs. You're the best judges of how to do that. Do it. And if, at the end of the year, we've saved 30 tonnes of fuel, fantastic!' "

Kahn has been in contact with many airline medical departments, visited engineering works and talked to engineers and maintenance staff. He says he has encountered widespread concern about the quality of filters and the frequency with which they are changed. Now the health implications of poor maintenance have been highlighted in a new report published by researchers at the University of Strathclyde. Peter Bain, a lecturer in Human Resource Management, and researcher Carol Boyd, a former flight attendant, examined the issue of air quality from the point of view of the staff who spend their working hours confined to crowded cabins.

Many crew members, they say, complain of symptoms normally associated with so-called "sick building syndrome" — "recurring or constant lethargy and headaches and a range of influenza/cold-type eye, nose and throat complaints".

A spokesman for British Airways said: "We are extremely confident that the quality of cabin air is high — higher than in office environments or standing on the average street corner or sitting in your own front room. We follow the manufacturers' guidelines on the changing of filters, and we buy them from the best supplier."

He said BA was in regular contact with the AHI, although he could not comment on the institute's proposals for new air-quality guidelines until more details were available. "Farrol Kahn speaks to us fairly regularly on issues of air quality, and we have a cordial relationship with him. We haven't necessarily answered all his questions to his satisfaction perhaps, but that's inevitable in this sort of situation. It's not a BA issue or reluctance — it's a general industry issue which is continually under review by industry bodies."

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
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Letter from Kenya Gail Davey

Welcome retreat

THE old man shuffled into the office-cum-clinic, and perched on the edge of a chair, his shoulders hunched against the pain. His breathing was fast and laboured, even when sitting down. His tired body was buried in layers of clothing, his chin tucked into the folds of a large scarf, and his face seemed remote, braced in distress.

His son explained quietly that the pain had worsened over the last few days, his father was eating little and talking less. A chest X-ray performed a month ago confirmed the family's fears. The fits of coughing and the blood-flecked spittle presaged the discovery of a tumour wrapped spider-like around a bronchus. An aching discomfort suggested extension to the two nearest ribs.

Given the old man's frailty, an operation could not be recommended. But radiotherapy to relieve the gnawing bony pain was sanctioned, so father and son embarked on the long journey to the capital, only to find that the X-ray machine had broken down.

The technicians were optimistic that they would have the materials to repair it within two weeks, but even then, there would be a backlog of one month's appointments to clear.

Father and son had returned to the family farm, where the old man , Samuel, had spent progressively more time curled up on a bed in the dark, hugging warmed bricks to ease the pain in his chest. The cousin of the owner of the local "duka na dawa" (pharmacy) had just the previous day heard of his misery, and given the family directions to Nyeri hospice. So here they were . . .

After a few questions and a brief examination, Mary, the Kikuyu hospice nurse, was ready to try a test dose of morphine. The old man spluttered on the fluid but managed to get it down. The son listened as Mary explained how often and how best to take the syrup, how to store it and measure it, how to keep it safely out of the hands of children.

She outlined the back-up the hospice can provide through home visits and clinic appointments. She began to ascertain what course the son expected his father's illness to take, and which other members of the family were involved in his care.

It was only as this discussion ebbed that we noticed an absence, a lack of something that previously filled the background — the rasping breaths of the old man had ceased. He was breathing quietly, sitting back in his chair, looking round at the hangings and pictures.

His son turned in amazement, and Samuel's creased face split into a wide smile. He shook hands all round and asked about the origins of the quilted wall hanging sent by a sister hospice. Then he asked who was in charge, and whether the hospice had any links to the government hospital. Mary's replies are practised — she stressed the importance of local support and voluntary work as well as international grants, the link between district hospitals and the hospice for staff training as well as patient referrals.

Samuel took up the medication card on which Mary had written out his daily treatment schedule, and asked if he might arrange another visit before too long. They agreed an appointment date for one week's time while Samuel's son paid for a small bottle of morphine. Samuel shook hands once again, tucked the card into his pocket and walked confidently to the door; his delighted son following in his steps.

SAMUEL survived another two weeks. The pain from his cancer was kept in check, and he was able to enjoy the stream of sons, daughters, cousins and grandchildren who travelled home to pay their respects. He died at home, and his son called at the hospice to extend an invitation to his funeral the following weekend.

Terminal care in developing countries is no luxury — it is a necessity born of late diagnoses and the paucity of treatments considered standard in other countries. Assistance that enables a patient to be cared for at home with good control of pain or other symptoms makes economic sense and quickly gains the support of the local community. Nyeri hospice is one of four currently operating in Kenya and developing links with the expanding Hospice Association of Southern Africa.



One of the posters which have made Marge Potter into the face of Birmingham PHOTO MIKE SEWELL

Meet Clinton's big date in Birmingham

WHEN Bill Clinton arrives in Birmingham next week for the G8 summit of the world's leading industrial nations, the official welcoming party will be eclipsed by a pensioner, *writes Peter Hetherington.*

Rather than filling the opening ceremony on May 15 with the usual great and good, the city council — effective hosts on behalf of the British government — has decided to give pride of place to Marge Potter, her husband Albert, and eight other ordinary Brummies.

They all feature in a £30,000 advertising campaign, "Birmingham Welcomes the World", which highlights 67-year-old Mrs Potter alongside the slogan, "Get Your Hair Done Marge, Bill Clinton's coming to town."

In England's second city, where the summit is regarded as the greatest event in recent memory, Marge has achieved such cult status that she is being put forward by councillors as the most suitable person to greet the world's most powerful man.

"She is truly representative of the city and of Britain, someone who generates a lot of warmth and sincerity," a council spokesman said.

"Fame at last at my age," she said last week. "It's absolutely wonderful, and it has given me a new lease of life. I would like to tell the president how proud we are to have him and to say 'Wonderful to see you, Mr President'."

She is unperturbed by the sexual allegations against Mr Clinton. "Everyone is innocent until proved guilty — that's all I would say about that. I think he's a lovely, charming man, and a brilliant statesman."

In the advertising campaign, Marge, who has only been abroad once — on a day trip to France — features on 350 boardings alongside other Brummies — young, old, Asian, black, and white, as representatives of a multicultural city.

Another poster, showing a 30-year-old man with his four-year-old son on his shoulders, screams: "Walk tall, Dave, this year we are head and shoulders above any city." Beside a smiling Sikh, a third says: "Spread the word, Zahir, Birmingham's the hottest place to be in 1998."

Birmingham city council said the aim had been to portray ordinary people rather than headline-grabbers. An estimated 11,000 visitors from the G8 countries will be attending the event in the city's International Convention Centre.



Notes & Queries Joseph Harker

***IS THERE* a fair way to compare, say, Titanic with Gone With The Wind?**

THE US magazine Variety recently recalculated the American box-office receipts of all films so that all were measured on the basis of 1998 admission prices. Gone With The Wind topped the list with a gross take of $1.2 billion, compared with a projected take of $600 million for Titanic. That would put Titanic in seventh place, ahead of Jaws, but still behind Snow White And The Seven Dwarfs, Star Wars, ET, 101 Dalmatians, and Bambi. — *Andrew Kean, Mill Hill, London*

***WHAT* is the history behind the handicapping of racehorses? The human athlete isn't lumbered with weights.**

HANDICAP races — in which horses carry weights according to their past performance — developed in the 18th century as a means of giving each horse a theoretically equal chance of winning. This obviously attracts excellent betting and gives more owners a chance to win races with their expensive investments. The first handicap race was won at Ascot in 1790 by Seagull, a horse belonging to the radical leader Charles James Fox. — *Hilary Bracegirdle, Director, National Horseracing Museum, Newmarket*

BEFORE, during and just after the second world war, track athletes *were* given "handicaps" based on their previous record. Most were run under Amateur Athletic Association rules. — *J H Davies, Haslemere, Surrey*

***ITALIANS* are supposed to speak quickly. Are some languages quicker-spoken than others, and if so, why?**

IT'S NOT a question of languages, but rather that some individuals have a much faster delivery. Context is also important. Contrast the slow and deliberate delivery of politicians such as Nelson Mandela, who want every word to have maximum impact, with the patter of newsreaders who have a large amount of information to impart in a finite time. — *David Elliff, São Paulo, Brazil*

Any answers?

WHEN* was the first dramatised TV killing? — *Philip Setel, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

THE* totals given for those killed by Stalin, Mao or Pol Pot usually include deaths from starvation. While Britain's Indian empire was a thriving concern, famines were not unusual, so can imperial figures be counted among history's mass murderers? — *Bryn Hughes, Wrexham

A Country Diary

Ray Collier

LOCH GARTEN: Normally visitors to this famous bird reserve are not allowed to see the ospreys and their nest until the birds have settled down and laid eggs. For a few days last month there were different arrangements, so we went down to see what was happening.

In order that early visitors would not be disappointed, someone had the great idea of positioning a video monitor in the entrance hut in the car park, and it was with anticipation that we walked towards a small group of people. Then we stood and looked at the bulky nest that filled the screen, but we had missed one of the birds by seconds.

The warden told us that the bird — he thought it was the female — had been hanging around the nest for a few days and, as she had been reluctant to leave, the male had been bringing her fish to eat. We waited for a few minutes and then someone in the forward hide panned the video camera down and there was the osprey sitting on a branch below the nest. Her head and shoulders filled the screen.

Later in the year this video monitor will be in the main hide which for me is the most exciting part of the set-up, as you can — in the camera — look down into the nest. Sometimes you can be lucky enough to see an adult bring fish in for the chicks.

Sixty-eight chicks have been successfully reared from this nest since 1959, and almost 2 million people have visited the Osprey Centre. We left the temporary monitor, and back on the main road we discussed whether we could count the osprey as our second migrant of spring — the first had been a wheatear.

Then the decision was made for us, as a few miles away over the [illegible] flew an osprey.

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
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People used to go to Timbuktu to collect its postmark, but these days art dealers go to plunder its heritage. **Alex Duval Smith** on the rape of the Niger Valley

Stealing beauty

"*THE* trouble with Timbuktu," says Mohamed Galla Dicko, "is that most people think it does not really exist. The world behaves as though it were just a mythical place." Soon its history will be little more than imaginary, according to Dicko, director of the Ahmed Baba library which houses 15,000 priceless Arabic manuscripts. They date from the days when Timbuktu was a centre of learning, and nomads who had followed the stars through the Sahara tethered their camels to hooks made from the local metal, gold.

Today Timbuktu, situated in the centre of one of West Africa's poorest countries, Mali, is a market town living off the profits from salt quarried in slabs in the desert. To the few eccentric tourists who can afford to fly here or take a boat along the Niger river, Timbuktu is also a collectable postmark. According to legend, it is the furthest a human being can travel. But this windswept town in the dunes, with 5,000 years of history, four medieval mosques and some 200 dwellings, which look as if they were moulded in a child's beach bucket, is not too distant for the world's art dealers.

They come to the Valley of the Niger — whose heritage is rated by historians and archaeologists as equal in wealth to Ancient Greece and the Nile Valley — to plunder in the name of the current fashion for "primitive" African art. At a rate of thousands of objects each year, artefacts ranging from the neolithic to the medieval are being removed from the Malian sand and smuggled out by air freight.

Beads, tombstones and terracotta figures usually disappear into private collections in Europe and the United States. Last year a stolen 12th century terracotta ram caused a diplomatic stir when it was given to President Jacques Chirac by his daughter, Claude. After a year of wrangling, the ram was returned to the Mali National Museum in March bearing the plaque "gift from the president of France". The Mali government is currently in conflict with the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, which is exhibiting two figures that may have been plundered.

For Dicko, guarding a treasure trove ranging from 16th century illuminated manuscripts to Korans and 17th century trade contracts in Arabic, Hebrew and even Spanish, there is also a crisis of attitude. "Some European institutions think they are doing us a favour because they use the old colonial argument that we cannot preserve books properly," he says. Dicko is currently in dispute with the French culture ministry after it borrowed a work by the 16th century poet Ahmed Baba and returned photocopies which are partly illegible.

Some old objects, but few of any value, are in Timbuktu Museum where the curator, El Boukhari Ben Essayouti, receives regular visits from dealers looking for collectables. "Plundering has been going on here since the 15th century. But we have the technology and the knowledge to learn about the past and we should not squander that opportunity," he says.

Ben Essayouti was offered $800 for this medieval oil lamp PHOTOGRAPH ALEX DUVAL SMITH

Ben Essayouti says a man describing himself as a tour guide recently offered him 500,000 West African francs ($800) for a medieval oil lamp that was on display at the museum. "My uncle is the imam at one of the mosques and had brought me the lamp for safekeeping at the museum," he says. "People think we are stupid."

There are international efforts to stop plundering — ranging from Internet sites and treaties to Unesco's listing of the world's historic places — but little appears to be effective in a poor country like Mali, four times the size of Britain, with huge tracts of deserted land.

Salia Male, deputy director of the National Museum of Mali, says: "Anyone exporting antiques is supposed to bring them to the museum for a certificate. But what the dealers do, after they have paid a couple of men to dig a site and have sifted the objects, is come here with a mediocre or new object, obtain the certificate, then switch the artefacts. Last month we organised a course for Customs officers in the hopes of teaching them to recognise valuable objects. But terracotta, especially, is very hard to date, even for experts."

Part of the problem is that dealers offer Malians sums for their heirlooms which, in a country where earnings average $8 a week, are irresistible. One new effort, in the village of Fombori, north of Mopti on the Niger, is a "pawn museum" at which peasants may hand in their heirlooms in return for loans.

Occasionally, there is an international outcry when objects come up for sale at auction houses in London, Paris and New York, or when, as happened last year, the French president was photographed in Paris-Match with a valuable figurine. In March Ethiopia won the right from Italy — but not the funds — to ship back the Axum Obelisk, taken by Mussolini's invading troops in 1935 and erected in Rome.

Tim Insoll, an expert on West African archaeology, believes the only solution to plundering lies in raising consciousness among governments through lobbying, and among individuals by printing warnings in guide books. Later this year a centre for the study of illicit antiquities will open in Cambridge, England. "It has to become socially unacceptable to buy these objects, just as it has become taboo to wear fur coats or to trade in ivory and endangered species," Insoll says.

Monsieur le patron

ART
Adrian Searle

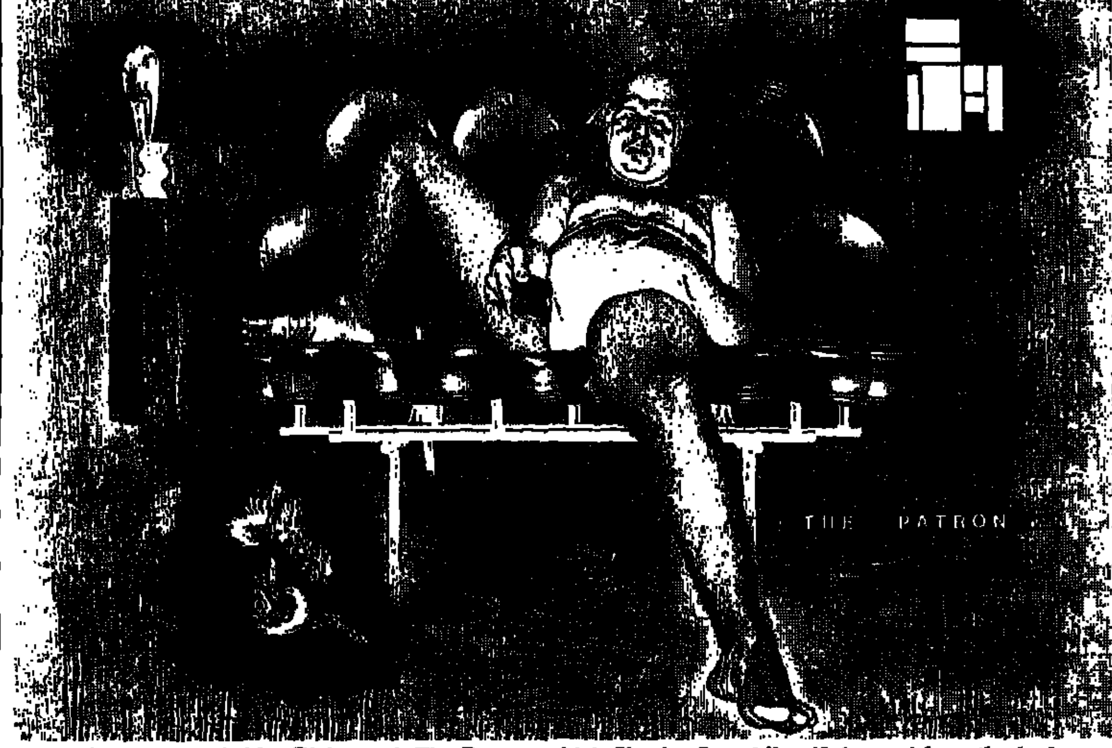
SHUT the door, off with the wig and out of these clothes. Surfing the channels in my underwear, one hand on the remote, the other in my pants. Just me here in the glow of the TV, me and the pedigree mutt that is scratching himself under my chair. I'm a patron. I'm a collector. I've got a Mondrian on my wall. But take it from me, purchasing power isn't everything.

For a while, Ashley Bickerton's painting The Patron hung in the back office at the Saatchi Gallery in London. Charles Saatchi said he'd wanted to hang it in his bedroom, but his wife (wisely, in my opinion) vetoed the idea. The painting now has a wall all to itself in the gallery, and the baleful Patron appears to be channel-zapping part one of a two-part show called (confusingly) Young Americans 2, until May 30.

Bickerton's painting depicts the art collector as slob. Saatchi's purchase of the painting suggests that actual, living patrons of the arts are no such thing, and that they even have a sense of humour. Jokes about collectors are unfair. I mean, were the Medicis *nice?*

But what do you say of a collector who keeps a guided missile on his roof? One of Saatchi's latest acquisitions is a rocket. It works. It is missing only the explosives. It sits on the gallery roof, pointed at the sky. It is the work of Gregory Green, an artist who in the past has made mock-up terrorist bomb factories, potentially functional nuclear devices and do-it-yourself LSD labs.

You might protest that Saatchi gets undue publicity, but it is because he's one of the few premier-league collectors in Britain — and the only one with a gallery all his own. You could say he distorts the market. Largely speaking, Saatchi is the market. Bickerton's Patron and Green's rocket are amusing distractions. The rest of the show is devoted to the work of painters David Salle, Terry Winters and Caroll Dunham, and to the painted assemblages of Jessica Stockholder.



Fat and happy . . . Ashley Bickerton's The Patron, which Charles Saatchi's wife barred from the bedroom

Stockholder's work is incredibly cheeky, and at its best is enormously exhilarating. A checklist of the materials used in her biggest and best work here, Bowtied In The Middle, reads as follows: "Wood, carpet, blue bulbs, orange boating rope, yellow and orange extension cords, plastic plant pot, terracotta plant pot, concrete, galvanised steel channel, steel cable and hardware, cotton fabric cushions, ribbon, plastic and fresh fruit, acrylic yarn".

Which doesn't tell us that the ribbons are green and wafting in the breeze of two electric fans, or that the hanks of reddish acrylic yarn are threaded through the pile of a shaggy purple carpet that hangs in an upturned U over a wooden frame. Or that there are real oranges and green plastic apples in the pots. Or that the blue light bulbs cast a faint blush of blue-ish light on the wall, which you don't see till you walk around the far side of the carpet, which has all the weight and alarming presence of a purple cow in the room.

Stockholder's work is full of details and surprises. Bowtied In The Middle is the most recent of her works here, and has a room all to itself. You get lost in the work as you would in a painting.

Dunham's big paintings are full of nightmarish, demonic heads and blobs. His cartoon heads clench their teeth, whip and stab one another, and hit themselves in the face with erect penises. Sometimes, little nests of polystyrene balls pepper the surface of the paintings, like acne on the moon. The paintings look alien and strange and full of manic energy. How is it I find them so tiresome? I think it is because they are so insistently, remorselessly in-your-face and hectoring.

There's mania, too, in Terry Winters's two large paintings here. For a long time, Winters derived his compound imagery from biological forms: seed-heads, micro-organisms, fungi spores and the like. Now they seem to owe more to computer-generated skeletal cities, events inside a particle accelerator, imaginary dimensions beyond time and space. The paintings are filled with superimposed networks, grids, vectors and helixes. As much as they hint at New Science, they also recall fifties French abstraction.

While Dunham tries to be wacky, Winters is serious, in the way that only painters can be. It is the kind of painting that talks to its shoes. Oddly, for all their painterly toil, Winters's paintings still manage to look newer and more vital than Dunham's work, which strikes me as being desperate to be new.

David Salle's image-scrambling welds of Pop imagery, comic-book covers, 18th century tapestry backgrounds and still-life are exhausting to look at. But owning a Salle is undoubtedly better than standing in the gallery looking at lots of them. Seeing too many of them together creates an exhausting overload. There's no narrative in Salle, just a welter of imagery. If I were a collector, I would happily hang one opposite the bed, where I could lie back and make connections between all the image-fragments and painted quotes and tell myself stories. I doubt that my wife would complain, and it would beat channel surfing.

Have we met before?

TELEVISION
Nancy Banks-Smith

DORA touched the heart even more than the Rhodes scholar and professor of archaeology who were losing their brilliant minds to Alzheimer's in **Assault on the Mind** (Channel 4). She was a countrywoman who had looked after pigs as a girl, and her pigs kept her company to her bitter end. Asked to name some animals, she said confidently, "Pigs." Then, "Little pigs." Then, doubtfully, "A sow? A sow is different, isn't it?"

I thought I would run through an alphabet of animals just to check I was all right really. Oh God, I can't think of an animal beginning with J! Jellyfish? I awaited the second part of David Paterson's lucid and moving report with more than professional interest.

The Optima research team at Oxford university, who had been studying Alzheimer's for 10 years, thought they might have found a way to prevent it. They already knew that Alzheimer's patients literally lose their minds. The medial temporal lobe of the brain softly and secretly vanishes, and with it go speech, memory, motor skills. All that is left is something speechless described by one patient's husband as a laser beam of love.

They did not know what triggered this ravenous loss. Then Dr Robert Clarke thought he saw a marked resemblance to a heart attack. He had been studying an amino acid called homocysteine found in blood plasma and implicated in heart attacks and strokes. High levels of homocysteine can be easily lowered by a vitamin, folic acid.

Alzheimer's patients did register high levels. High homocysteine levels were associated with a four-fold risk of Alzheimer's.

Folic acid is found in precisely the food your mother told you to eat up and you didn't. Leafy greens, cabbage, sprouts, broccoli and spinach ("It's broccoli, dear." "I say it's spinach, and I say the hell with it!") Or more temptingly in strawberries and oranges. Or as cheap tablets in any chemist. I left you a few.

A peripheral but entertaining aspect of Optima's research is that it was generously funded by the US drug company Bristol-Myers Squibb. Perhaps not entirely out of the goodness of their hearts. The answer might turn out to be cabbage.

No medical journal would publish Optima's research because the evidence is circumstantial. Homocysteine may have been seen hanging about in a gang with a shifty look and a baseball bat, but there is no evidence that it delivered the disabling blow to the brain. No jury would convict.

Turned down like a bedspread by their peers, Optima decided to go public on TV. Professor David Smith, whose mother died of Alzheimer's, chose his words carefully. "My immediate hope is that supplementation of the diet with folic acid would be a possible way of reducing the incidence of Alzheimer's." *Hope*, you notice, and *possible*. That, however, is the noise a wildly excited scientist makes.

Nothing in life had prepared me for the Albert Memorial. I was on the top deck of a bus when I first saw it and I actually fell off my seat laughing. Then again, I cried at the sight of Trafalgar Square at dawn, pure, pigeoned and unpeopled. I must have been more emotional in those days.

The delightful **One Foot in the Past** (BBC2) has returned with a privileged preview of the refurbished Albert Memorial, and a sneak peep up Albert's trousers. It will be unveiled in November. Stand by for blasting then. It looks like a Victorian spaceship, designed to carry Albert to heaven.

Humility, a very unlikely virtue in such confident company, emerged from her bubble-wrap with her candle slightly askew. She is gold-plated. So is the huge crucifix pimpled with red, white and blue stones. So is Albert himself.

His original gold was stripped off during the first war on a pull-the-other-leg pretext that he might attract zeppelins. He has been recovered from nose to toes in a double layer of pure gold. "Can I see just a little bit more leg?" Kirsty Wark asked the man with the Midas touch, Sir Jocelyn Stevens, chairman of English Heritage. The boot, as she said, was almost breathtakingly bright. Unreal, really, like those brilliant dawns that only wildlife cameramen see.

I suppose English Heritage has also covered the obvious problem?

CD Reviews

Andrew Clements

Vaughan Williams: The Pilgrim's Progress
Finley/Coleman-Wright/Evans/Gritton/Stephen/Royal Opera/Hickox (Chandos CHAN 9625) (2CDs) £27.99 ★★★★★

IT TOOK Vaughan Williams 45 years to fashion an opera out of Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress. It finally reached the stage at Covent Garden in 1951, just in time for the Festival of Britain. Full stagings since the premiere have been rare, though the remarkable new Chandos recording is based upon the Royal Opera performances at the Barbican last November. Even then it seemed more of a work for the concert hall than the opera house. The allegory is essentially an inward-looking study of the search for self-knowledge, and the greatest parts of the score are those which express that aspiration and endeavour. On disc those passages seem more remarkable still, redoubling admiration for Richard Hickox's control of the diffuse structure and for the rapt, concentrated playing of the Opera House orchestra. Gerald Finley breathes real flesh-and-blood life into the character of Pilgrim.

Morales: Requiem for Philip II
Gabrieli Consort/McCreesh (Archiv 457 597-2) £15.99 ★★★★

PHILIP II of Spain achieved his operatic immortality in Verdi's Don Carlos, but when he died in 1598, after 40 years as the ruthless ruler of an empire at the height of its power, his funeral in Toledo Cathedral was an event of huge ceremonial and musical splendour. No details of the music used at the funeral have survived, but Paul McCreesh has attempted to recreate what might have been sung on that occasion. The 1544 Requiem setting by Cristobal De Morales, who was in charge of the music at Toledo in the middle of the 16th century, is the centrepiece of his liturgical reconstruction, capped by an extraordinarily expressive motet by Alonso Lobo. Whatever the historical veracity of this sequence, the potent beauty of the music is enough justification in itself.

Lord Berners: The Triumph Of Neptune; L'Uomo Dal Baffi; Valses Bourgeoises; Polka
English Northern Philharmonia/Royal Ballet Sinfonia/Lloyd-Jones (Marco Polo 8.223711) £13.99 ★★★

THE Right Honourable Sir Gerald Hugh Tyrwhitt-Wilson, Lord Berners (1883-1950) wrote music that is easy on the ear, totally superficial and lacking any shred of originality. Berners was the archetypal English dilettante composer, and it is extraordinary that he should have impressed Diaghilev enough for the impresario to offer him a commission in 1926. The resulting ballet, The Triumph Of Neptune, is the main work on this disc; its mixture of woozy late romanticism and folksy reverie, spiced with a little neoclassical Stravinsky, seems only designed to be inoffensive. The earlier L'Uomo Dal Baffi, written for a puppet theatre in 1918, is far more interesting, prefiguring the wiry brittleness of Poulenc and Milhaud just a few years later.



Twice as good . . . Gwyneth Paltrow and John Hannah in Sliding Doors

A double slice of life

CINEMA
Richard Williams

FOR a romantic comedy set in the swing of contemporary London, **Sliding Doors** takes the usual course of selling itself by addressing a pretty big question: to what extent are the major movements of our lives governed by accidents of fate? There's hardly a film — especially not a romantic comedy — whose plot doesn't depend on some wild coincidence or other, but Peter Howitt's film makes it the whole point of the exercise.

Helen, a young PR woman, has just been sacked after a row at an early morning meeting and is taking the Tube home. As she goes down the steps to the platform, a small child gets in her way. The carriage doors close in her face. She goes to hail a cab, but someone tries to snatch her bag. Eventually she gets home to her partner, Gerry, a struggling novelist. When she notices two glasses and a bottle of brandy on the dressing-table, and Gerry acts oddly, her suspicions are aroused. For a while, suspicions are all they remain, and she takes a job as a waitress.

But what if the child hadn't delayed Helen, if she'd caught the train? Then she'd have found Gerry in bed with Lydia, an old flame. In response, she'd have had her long brown hair cut short and dyed blonde, and started her own PR firm. She'd have begun a relationship with James, a good-looking man of impeccably unselfish instinct. And Gerry would have been pushed to the margin of her life.

Howitt's script bifurcates at the moment the doors close, interleaving the two divergent stories until, after many alarms and amusements, they intersect to reveal truth and destiny. The double-arc of the plot certainly creates suspense at the end, when the occasional dark undertones appear ready to shade into full-scale tragedy. And of course it's a neat twist on the tradition of getting extra value from a pretty young actress by inviting her to play both sides of a split personality.

The impressive Gwyneth Paltrow is not playing an American girl in London. After her credible performance in Douglas McGrath's Emma, Paltrow updates her English accent, capturing the intonation of the nicely brought up, mildly louche girls you might find in Notting Hill. The local dialect presents no problem. "An-*na*," she chides her best friend. "Ease up, bloody hell!" And to the faithless boyfriend: "You wanker. You sad, sad wanker."

Naturally, the assertiveness of the made-over blonde is more engaging than the passive despondency of the Mark 1 brunette, but Paltrow succeeds in keeping both of them alive in the audience's imagination, until both girls suffer simultaneous moments of faintness. All Paltrow's hard work culminates in that affecting moment, when the audience realises the depth of its sympathy for the two Helens.

John Hannah's sheer niceness makes James into an appealing presence, albeit a little bland for some tastes. John Lynch, as the weak, duplicitous Gerry, is given much better material to work with.

Sliding Doors is a charming entertainment, if never quite living up to its promise to become more than that. Although Howitt brings his double-tale to a single conclusion, his attempt to have it both ways is a built-in weakness. They don't, because life isn't like that. There never was a choice, after all.

The opening minutes of My Son **The Fanatic** suggest we're in for an extended skit based on standard cultural misunderstandings between Asian immigrants and the English middle class. When Farid, the son of Parvez and Minoo, becomes engaged to Madelaine, the chief inspector's daughter, the potential for social embarrassment is all too clear. As the two families meet in the chief inspector's suburban mansion, the heart begins to sink. But every facile assumption is overturned.

Adapted by Hanif Kureishi from a short story, and directed by Udayan Prasad, the film uses the rise of Islamic fundamentalism among Asian youth in a northern town as the background to characters of great richness and originality. This is a film that works at many levels: as a portrait of individuals under pressure, and as a study of a phenomenon that is probably only in its infancy in multicultural England.

Parvez (Om Puri), a middle-aged immigrant from Pakistan, is working as a cab driver and putting in extra hours to pay for the engagement party. Like his colleagues, he spends the evenings ferrying prostitutes. And when Schitz (Stellan Skarsgard), a German businessman, comes to town, Parvez introduces him to Bettina (Rachel Griffiths), whose wig and exaggerated make-up conceal a kindred spirit.

Young Farid (Akbar Kurtha), revolted by the tawdry excesses of this smokestack Babylon, breaks off his engagement, gives up his accountancy studies and joins a fundamentalist group, denouncing the assimilation that has been the object of his parents' lives.

"It is you", he says, "who have swallowed the white and Jewish propaganda that there is nothing to our lives but the empty accountancy of things."

Parvez, still half in love with the England of his schoolbooks, agonises over the betrayal of everything he has worked to provide. Yet he allows Farid to give board in their house to a *maulvi*, a religious teacher from Pakistan.

Prasad allows the film to gather intensity as its story deepens, aided by two central performances of the highest quality. Puri, a veteran Indian actor who has worked with Satyajit Ray and Mrinal Sen, deploys a rumpled dignity as he listens to his Louis Armstrong records and holds petty racism at bay. There's no problem in accepting his relationship with Bettina, whom the Australian actress Rachel Griffiths imbues with a real emotional eloquence.

Funded by the BBC and the Arts Council, My Son The Fanatic won't be everyone's idea of Friday night entertainment, but it brings dramatic and cinematic skill to bear on difficult questions with an edge and a spirit of social inquiry that should be a staple of a healthy domestic cinema.

Talent spotting in Taormina

Michael Billington laments Britain's narrow perspective of theatre

HOW much do the British know of European theatre? The question occurred to me yet again when the Sicilian Taormina Arte, on whose jury I sit, awarded the European Theatre Prize of $65,000 to 65-year-old Italian director Luca Ronconi, and the additional New Realities prize of £22,000 to the Swiss animateur Christoph Marthaler.

To which the general reaction in Britain may well be, Luca and Christoph who? In fact, both are major figures on the European scene. Ronconi (who received the main prize in the wake of Mnouchkine, Brook, Strehler, Heiner Muller and Robert Wilson) will be remembered by anyone lucky enough to have been in Edinburgh in 1970 when his production of Orlando Furioso took the festival by storm. Staged in an ice-rink, it turned Ariosto's chivalric romance into a piece of promenade theatre, with hippogriffs and sea-monsters hurtling towards us on trucks.

Since then, Ronconi has continued to work on both an epic and an intimate scale. In Taormina we saw a video of his amazing 1991 production of Karl Kraus's The Last Days Of Mankind.

One unforgettable image sums up the whole: into the hedonistic world of the Viennese Ringstrasse, Ronconi suddenly brings on trolleys heaped with the bodies of the first world war dead.

But Ronconi also works in minute detail on text and language. We saw an extract from his current production of The Brothers Karamazov: the Grand Inquisitor's Speech, on the disastrous consequences of free will and Christian love, was simply staged on a bare wooden table.

If Ronconi's work encompasses both grand images and textual precision, Marthaler is a creator of new forms. A trained musician, he acknowledges Schubert alongside Chekhov and Beckett as his masters.

Last year Stunde Null won the London International Festival of Theatre. It was a brilliant, often hilarious piece in which seven grey-suited men were stripped of dignity and clothes while being trained in vacuous rhetoric and the art of public office.

At Taormina they also keep in touch with past winners. Robert Wilson was represented by the Berliner Ensemble production of Der Ozeanflug: a three-part show comprising a Brecht radio feature about Lindbergh's flight, a Heiner Muller play about the deification of technology, and Dostoevsky's Notes From The Underground. It was the Muller that showed Wilson's visual talents at their best. In a dream landscape filled with mountainous crags, we saw seven actresses evoke a world in which classical myth merged with apocalyptic modern reality.

Wilson is a great image-maker. He is also a reminder of Britain's general detachment from the European mainland, and of the fact that there is a theatrical world elsewhere.

Been here, done that

PASS THE POPCORN
Derek Malcolm

I WONT easily forget the scene at the San Sebastian Festival last autumn when Adrian Lyne, Jeremy Irons and Dominique Swain linked arms to walk through the crowd into the Maria Teresa Theatre for the first public screening of their new film.

They looked a bit apprehensive, but proud with it — determined to get through a difficult occasion with as much dignity as possible.

The film, of course, was Lolita, in which Irons plays Humbert Humbert and Swain, Lolita. The Spanish audience received it with respectful applause, though they did lighten up a bit when Irons was given a rather early career award.

The film hits London screens this month but the tabloids have already struck, pronouncing the film a paedophile's charter, and — in a re-run of the lather created over Crash last year — urging the censor to ban it.

To anyone who has been watching movies as long as I have, the whole thing takes on an air of rather wearying predictability. It's happened here so often before.

There were, among many others, Paul Morrissey and Andy Warhol's Trash, Bertolucci's Last Tango In Paris, Nagisa Oshima's Ai No Corrida, Liliana Cavani's The Night Porter, John McNaughton's Henry: Portrait Of A Serial Killer, and Scorsese's The Last Temptation Of Christ. A list that, to put it mildly, contains some of the more interesting movies of the era.

Film, it seems, exercises the wrath of the censorious a good deal more than books, as if somehow it was unsafe to allow ordinary people (who are unlikely to read Nabokov and J G Ballard) to confront films of similar audacity.

If Lyne is to be told he's made a disgusting film by the tabloids, just as Cronenberg was labelled a pornographer for Crash, we have to ask ourselves why Nabokov and Ballard have on the whole escaped such charges. Is it because both films took elements from the books and perverted them, or because books are respectable and films are not?

Three things militate against any level-headed look at Lolita — apart, that is, from the present furore about freeing sadistic paedophiles.

The first is that Lyne's previous record (not to be read out in court before sentencing) includes Fatal Attraction, 9½ Weeks and Indecent Exposure. The second is that he and Irons make Humbert a marginally more sympathetic creature than he was in the book. And the third is that the film-maker requires us to share just a little of the erotic guilt along with his anti-hero.

There may be a fourth as well, since it is obvious that the child-woman of the movie is by no means guileless and thus in some way complicit. We don't like that idea, nor will we readily admit that the under-age can be sexually provoking, even to those for whom paedophilia is anathema.

But those who wish to prevent others watching the film in case some psychopath is turned on by it need reminding that several people objected to The Sound Of Music because someone might get a thrill out of seeing Julie Andrews's slip. Times change — but not that much.

The year of living hopefully

Richard Gott

1968: Marching in the Streets
by Tariq Ali and Susan Watkins
Bloomsbury 224pp £20

I *MISSED* out on May 1968. In distant South America at the time, I could hardly have been further from the Paris barricades. Yet, as Tariq Ali and Susan Watkins make clear in their memorial version of the events of that *annus mirabilis*, it didn't actually matter where you were. Revolution was in the air all over the place. As with 1848, that other great year of revolutionary failure, the significance of 1968 was its international dimension.

Too many memoirs of the sixties stress the sex and the drugs, and forget about the political dramas that took place on a global scale. Tariq Ali, who was one of the leaders thrown up by these events, is not likely to make a mistake of that kind. He has already written two personal accounts of the sixties but this is designed to be something different. It is not detached history, and the author's nostalgic Trotskyism gives it an authentic period flavour. Yet as a radical textbook it makes for a good read with many interesting, and often amusing, insights. It can safely be left about for your grandchildren — or indeed your servants — to read without moral danger.

While Paris was the epicentre of the seismic shock, the revolutionary tide spread everywhere, to Prague, to Mexico, to Pakistan — even to Chile. The students at my university went on strike, enabling me to set off around Latin America to write articles for the Guardian — a delightful and unexpected opportunity as it turned out.

I arrived in Guatemala the day the American ambassador was assassinated by leftwing guerrillas; I spent time with the rebellious students in Mexico City in the weeks before they were gunned down on the eve of the Olympics; I flew in to Havana to hear Fidel denounce the Prague Spring and support the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia — the end of the road for most of his European friends, who continued to express solidarity with their earlier enthusiasm for the Cuban revolution by displaying iconic posters of Che Guevara.

It is important to have an account of 1968 that recognises the international aspect. France exploded, but so too did Germany, Italy and Britain. Part and parcel of events in western Europe was the unfolding drama further east, as the political crisis burst on to the streets of Prague, Warsaw and Belgrade.

Developments in two Asian countries, Vietnam and China, also played a key role in stirring up the global upheaval. By the end of 1967, people everywhere had got used to perceiving the American carpet bombing of Vietnam as an endless backdrop to international affairs. What made the difference at the end of January 1968 was the "Tet offensive", indicating not just the ability of the Vietnamese to withstand the horrific bombing assault, but also their capacity to fight back in the most dramatic way possible. David could defeat Goliath. An American president toppled and fell.

Millions of students marching across China also had an exemplary effect elsewhere. With their "little red book" of Mao quotations, the Red Guards destroyed the power of the old Communist party. They helped create a global atmosphere in which anything seemed possible.

Imagination au pouvoir is the slogan everyone likes to remember. Yet the right never really lost control. The world system continued to ossify disastrously for a further 20 years. The Greek colonels had already made their point in April. The Vietnam war continued until 1975.

The real culprit was Leonid Brezhnev, whose destruction of the Prague Spring led to a military takeover in China in the name of security, and an end to all hopes of a liberal socialism in Europe. And in Latin America, the rightwing backlash prefigured the military dark ages that were to come. We still like to think of 1968 as a year of revolution. Yet the record clearly shows that the counter-revolution came hard on its heels.

If you would like to order this book at the special price of £17 contact CultureShop (see page 33)

Paperbacks

Desmond Christy

The End of Masculinity, by John MacInnes (Open University Press, £13.99)

AT THE weekend I was out with the boys in the forests of north London, hugging trees, fighting bears and banging on the drum kit of our primal nature, when I found this pinned to a tree with a spear. I settled down by the light of a camp fire to see what kind of rot is being fed to OU students. MacInnes argues that masculinity does not really exist but was dreamed up out of men's existential anxiety: "Society is struggling to reconcile its knowledge that men and women are essentially similar (ie, what they are as human beings is infinitely greater than what divides them as different sexes) and its claim that all human beings are created equal with its awareness that men still had much more resources, power and status than women, and that most men and women continue to lead such different lives." This came as an awful blow to my men's group. "We must reconstruct our masculinity," announced our leader, pulling up in his Porsche. "Leave it out," I told him. Which was when he socked me one and I began to explain all about the End of Aggression.

The Morgesons, by Elizabeth Stoddard (Penguin, £7.99)

ONE of the most original and overlooked novelists of 19th century America, Stoddard is part of that movement towards female emancipation that men find so troublesome. In this *Bildungsroman*, her heroine, Cassandra, seems to win what is rightfully hers but at the same time discovers the limits of her freedom.

The View from the Ground, by Martha Gellhorn (Granta, £8.99)

JUSTICE at Night, one of Gellhorn's most famous reports, begins with her getting off a coach and buying a car for $28. Because she buys a car she gets to see a lynching. When it is all over she hears the lynchers saying goodnight to each other: "So long, Jake . . . See you t'morrow, Sam". She caught on early to the banality of evil. This book is one of the most vivid, honest and humane accounts of our century. It contains reports from Depression America, a betrayed Czechoslovakia, visits to watch the Poles resisting communism, the trial of Eichmann, Spain after Franco's death, and Cuba.

Memoirs of a Spymaster: The Man Who Waged a Secret War Against the West, by Markus Wolf, with Anne McElvoy (Pimlico, £6.99)

WOLF and his chums in the East German secret police — he was head of the foreign intelligence branch — caused enormous suffering to the citizens of the DDR and its enemies. This books is marketed as if it was the latest Frederick Forsyth novel. The cover shows a blurred figure and over the "p" in Spymaster there is the crosshairs of a rifle sight. Wolf is sold as "the greatest spymaster of our century, a shadowy legend throughout the cold war and a continuing mystery — until now". It is a riveting read but Wolf's apologia can be hard to stomach.

Good at games

Hugh Haughton

The Selected Letters of Marianne Moore
edited by Bonnie Costello, Celeste Goddridge and Cristanne Miller
Faber 597pp £30

"*I HAVE* always wanted to see the hypodermic opening in a snake-fang," Marianne Moore wrote to Elizabeth Bishop, who had sent her two "but could not have anticipated what a treatise on specialisation the entire implement is — with that swirling taper and high polish."

It's a highly characteristic moment (in her early letters from Bryn Mawr she used to sign herself "Fangs"). The 550 pages of her weird and wonderful Selected Letters, admirably introduced but inadequately annotated by the editors, trigger a comparable shudder of recognition. During the course of her immense correspondence with family and friends, you meet as strangely specialised a sensibility as you will ever encounter.

Moore is one of the great originals in the history of American modernism, and her letters are of inexhaustible interest partly for what they tell us piecemeal about that complex, many-sided movement, but more because of what they show us about that almost mythical creature (or creation) herself. "My! You do notice things," a friend told her at college; and noticing things became her speciality — a speciality awesomely represented by these letters as much as in famous poems such as "The Jerboa" or "Pangolin".

"Writing, for me, is entrapped conversation," she told Ezra Pound, and the letters demonstrate just how native to her was the uniquely stilted, homey and pedantic style of her Collected Poems. This cross-section shows her as a supreme precisionist but also in action as a responsible (thoroughly unbohemian) literary citizen. She regularly takes Pound to task for his anti-Semitism: "Ezra, you are intolerable, to defy me, about the Jews who are not mine alone, but everyone's benefactor."



Marianne Moore, aged 81, opens the 1968 baseball season at Yankee Stadium in New York

After getting her degree in Bryn Mawr, Moore spent the bulk of her life in Brooklyn and Manhattan, and her passion for natural history was fostered via the urban cultural institutions of the day, moving between the library where she worked, the Natural History Museum, the zoo, natural history movies, the circus and the art galleries of the metropolis. In her poetry and letters, objects and creatures are mounted for inspection, as in an exhibition; their fate is to become rare items in the idiosyncratic imaginary museum that is Moore's imagination.

Her letters, like the poems, are crammed with delectable, high-precision detail and shimmer with technical descriptions of clothes, shells, paintings, flowers, exotic creatures, of the most dazzling and gratuitous kind. Her huge circle of correspondents knew how to play the game. They sent her innumerable exotica from all over the world — not only fangs, but flowers, seeds, postcards of rare flora and fauna, brooches, treasures, fruit and cheese.

Moore never married, living with her mother until her death in 1947, and thereafter alone, though amid a network of distinguished New York friends, where she became increasingly famous and (in her tricorn hat) happy to play the part of eccentric poet.

Though a high proportion of the letters are to the family and about family matters, they give little evidence of intellectual or personal change over the years, nor of any affairs of the heart, apart from her enthusiastic friendships for younger women such as Bryher, Louise Crane and Elizabeth Bishop, who bring out the best in her.

The big puzzle is the currency of animals and animal description as a model for the aesthetic in her letters, as in her poems. In the early letters she is not only "Fangs", but "Gater" and "Brother", her brother Warner is "Biter", "Toad" or "Turtle", and their mother is "Fawn", "Mouse" or "Bunny". The result is an unlikely farrago of late Henry James and early Beatrix Potter.

As poet, poetry editor of the Dial and at the end of her life a Life-sized celebrity, she corresponded with and worked on or with nearly all the significant poets of her generation — Pound, Eliot, William Carlos Williams, Wallace Stevens ("a cohort of exacting fanaticals") — and many of the younger generation — Elizabeth Bishop, W H Auden, even Allen Ginsberg.

Much of this literary correspondence and commentary is polite, but her politeness is tactical as well as tactful, enabling her to say very extraordinary things to and about her peers. On Stevens: "Wallace Stevens is beyond fathoming, he is so strange, it is as if he had a morbid secret he would rather perish than disclose, and just as he tells it out in his sleep, he changes into an uncontradictable judiciary with a gown and a gavel." On Pound: "He has the mechanics of a somewhat rare firearm and is no two times alike."

Taken together, these letters are testament to an extraordinary poetic intelligence that played an unobtrusively central role in the story of American modernism. She once wrote to William Carlos Williams that "the catnip that art is, or ignis fatuus, or drop on the cactus, does seem worth the martyrdom of the pursuit". This huge volume stands as pungent evidence of her long pursuit.

Down but not out . . . Alec Guinness in Kind Hearts And Coronets

Rewind to British cinema's glory days

Jonathan Cooper

The Finest Years:
British Cinema of the 1940s
by Charles Drazin
André Deutsch 281pp £17.99

The Unknown 1930s:
An Alternative History of the British Cinema (1929-1939)
Edited by Jeffrey Richards
IB Tauris 276pp £29.95

IT SEEMS that the British have always had a love-hate relationship with their own film industry. With seesaw regularity it lurches from sentimental patriotism to self-hating denigration, from national pride to cultural cringe. Meanwhile, year in and year out, parliamentary committees are formed, endless debates are held, all in pursuit of the same phantom, the future of the British film industry. The future, the future, always the future.

And yet the British film industry has a past as well. British film history, incredible though it may seem, does not start with Trainspotting. Here are two books which prove the fact and which put forward, if only by implication, the even more radical argument that this past might be something we can learn from.

Both books are to be treasured, although Charles Drazin's is by some way the more engaging and readable. Drazin believes that British film-makers in the 1940s were galvanised by war, agreeing with Jean Renoir that "the battle of Britain, through destruction of life and property, was wholly beneficial to the British film industry". But this is merely the premise of his book, not its thesis. His aim is not to re-evaluate the films, but to celebrate the lives and personalities of the people who made them.

Drazin's is a genuinely quixotic enterprise, being both mad and lovably heroic at the same time. These days it's an uphill struggle, surely, even to get people to remember that there once existed a film-maker called Alberto Cavalcanti who fashioned, in Went The Day Well?, Champagne Charlie and the ventriloquist's dummy section of Dead Of Night, three of the most vibrant and unusual narratives in British cinema. Who would want to know the story of his life, for heaven's sake? Yet after reading about this Brazilian aristocrat who studied law in Rio and architecture in Geneva, fell in with the Parisian avant-garde, joined the GPO Film Unit in London, made features at Ealing, presided over a disastrous attempt to revive the Brazilian film industry and ended his days as an itinerant film-maker in Romania, Italy, France and Israel, you end up echoing Drazin's plea for a full-length biography.

The book is studded with similar unlikely odysseys. Here too is Robert Hamer, the brilliant maths undergraduate rusticated from Cambridge because of a homosexual affair, who managed to direct that callous masterpiece Kind Hearts And Coronets before lapsing into alcoholism and bankruptcy. Fascinating stories, all of them, narrated with wit, generosity and unobtrusive erudition.

The Unknown 1930s takes a more routine and academic approach, but still throws up some treasurable material. Like Charles Drazin — who practically ignores Michael Powell, Frank Launder and Sidney Gilliat — Jeffrey Richards and his contributors pass over the more established names (Hitchcock, most obviously) to "chart a new map of British cinema" in the 1930s which takes an equal interest in quota quickies and the work of such emigré directors as Bernard Vorhaus and Berthold Viertel. Even better, there are splendid essays on the scenery-chewing melodramas of Tod Slaughter and on forgotten British horror movies.

Meanwhile Drazin's book leaves us with an even more sobering thought, which is that British cinema's finest achievements were the work of extraordinary, perhaps irreplaceable individuals, created and shaped by a historical moment which Blair's Britain, hypnotised by youth culture and torpid with affluence, will never replicate.

Truth lost in conflict

Jonathan Steele

Between Serb and Albanian:
A History of Kosovo
by Miranda Vickers
Hurst 328pp £35hbk £14.95pbk

Kosovo: A Short History
by Noel Malcolm
Macmillan 492pp £20

A WORRYING new disease is spreading through Europe's foreign ministries. Known as "Yugoslavia fatigue", it creeps up on officials almost unawares, dulling the senses and stifling normal human reactions. If books can produce a cure, these two by Miranda Vickers and Noel Malcolm ought to.

Both are remarkably gloomy, even apocalyptic. Vickers, who has already written two earlier books on Albania, sees no chance of a negotiated solution for the Kosovo Albanians now living in the southern part of Serbia. She foresees only two scenarios: either independence guaranteed by international force or a bloodbath. Since no Western government is yet willing to use its troops to intervene in Kosovo, the outcome can only be the latter.

Malcolm, who is better known as a specialist on Bosnia, describes Kosovo as "the most intractable of all the political conflicts in the Balkans". "It is arguably the area with the worst human rights abuses in the whole of Europe," he goes on, "and certainly the place where, if war does break out, the killing and destruction will be more intense than anything hitherto witnessed in the region."

While their predictions are dire, their analysis of the past is quite encouraging, at least in the sense that they refute the bar-room platitudes of those Western politicians and journalists who put the whole Balkan mess down to "ancient ethnic hatreds".

Malcolm calls this approach essentially false. There never were ethnic wars in the history of Bosnia or Croatia, and the only conflicts with a partly ethnic character were modern ones, produced under special geopolitical conditions, such as the second world war. He does not deny that there are "low-level prejudices" but rightly argues that there is a very long road from there to mass murder. "It was the political leaders who propelled the people down that road, and not vice versa."

Vickers takes a similar view. Differences of language and religious tradition and custom have been over-emphasised, she argues. Ethnic tensions have been "imported" into Kosovo, largely during the last century. Both writers point out that Albanians and Serbs lived side by side fairly peacefully for 900 years before and during the Ottoman empire. At the famous Battle of Kosovo Polje against the Ottoman Sultan in 1389, which is seen in Serbian myth as the event that confirms the existence of an exclusively Serbian state in Kosovo, they show that Albanians and Serbs fought on the same side against the Sultan.

This is not the only myth they de-bunk. Malcolm demolishes the Serb claim that Kosovo is the "cradle of Serbian civilisation" because the seat of the Orthodox Patriarchate is in the city of Pec. The seat was founded in central Serbia and only moved to Pec when the original complex was burnt down. Most of the medieval Serbian monasteries and churches were built outside Kosovo. Vickers records that the first world war desecration of the frescoes in the monastery of Gracanica, near the Kosovan capital Pristina, was not done by Albanian Muslims but by fellow Orthodox believers in the Bulgarian army, who used the place as a stables.

On the vexed issue of which group was the original majority — the so-called ethnographic right to rule — they agree that in the middle ages Kosovo had more Serbs than Albanians. But this had already been reversed by 1911, before the Serbs sought to impose their rule as the Ottoman empire imploded.

Today's Albanian majority is not, as the Serbs claim, the product of vicious repression of Serbs by the Axis powers during the second world war, or of a rampant post-war Albanian campaign to have more children. The birthrate among Serb peasants in Kosovo was as high as among Albanians. It just happened that more Albanians were peasants.

In spite of their broad agreement, these two well-documented and coolly written books complement each other in their focus. Malcolm devotes most of his energy to the period up to 1918. Vickers deals more fully with modern times. With luck, their books should serve as a collective wake-up call before the latest generation of local politicians send their people into battle.

Surprise at the end of time

Nicholas Lezard

Girlfriend in a Coma
by Douglas Coupland
Flamingo 281pp £12.99

DOUGLAS COUPLAND did not coin the term "Generation X" but it has stuck fast to him; to his credit, he has never tried to detach himself from the label, pinned to him largely in gratitude that he was a writer alert enough to be genuinely contemporary.

The charge then follows that he is part of the problem: in prose as easy to read as it is to watch TV, he describes a tribe of rootless, affectless post-adolescents, concerned but helpless. The consolations of society and religion have vanished; and in that perfect fit between subject matter and delivery, it is, bizarrely, a guarantee of his world-view's validity that his novels are utterly, and forgivably, forgettable.

That won't happen here. For the first time, something happens in a Douglas Coupland novel. In fact, lots of things happen. Such as the end of the world, no less. But never mind about that for the moment. It's 1979. A 17-year-old girl, Karen, dieting ferociously before a planned Hawaiian holiday, pops a couple of Valiums at a party and then goes into a coma. That day she had given her boyfriend, Richard, a note in which she says she has seen visions of the future, and that she feels she has seen too much, and has a feeling she is going to be "taken hostage".

It occurs to me that it would not be a good idea to reveal more of the plot. A great deal of its charm — apart from the casual fluency of its prose — lies in the unfolding of its plot, its sequential surprise.

It's a novel that boldly revels in spookiness, that makes it part of its fabric. Coupland engineers a day-long barrage of coincidences for his narrator that testifies to the richness and grip of his imagination: "that every single moment is a coincidence."

The book does go nuts — to the point where speculation about the book's genesis (Coupland had a breakdown during a gruelling European tour a couple of years ago) becomes morbidly germane. One has always sensed that Coupland was aware of the purposelessness of his books, but this is a book with a very definite purpose: he directly tells us to pull our socks up and look at the world afresh.

Personally, I think Coupland's conclusions, his remedies for the world, are contradictory, possibly bogus, and not a little embarrassing; but at least he is trying to say something, to raise the stakes. He is becoming extraordinary.

Life in the concrete jungle

Paul Evans

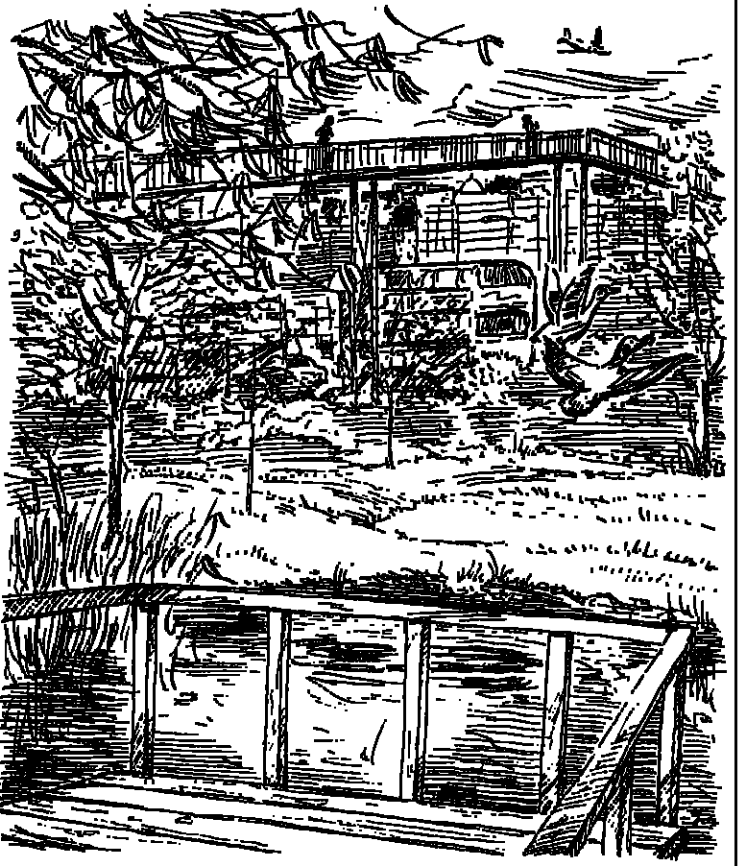


ILLUSTRATION BARRY LARKING

THE path from the old farm house, under the spreading ash tree, leads out across freshly cut grass towards the pond. A pair of mallards rise from the water's edge, resentful of the intrusion. The pond water is clear, and up through the water crowsfoot comes a smooth newt, which takes a gulp of air before shimmying back out of sight. Long blades of reedmace leaves emerge from the water, and around the pond fresh foliage of grassland plants shine in the spring rain. A pastoral idyll? Like all such chocolate-box images, the reality is often grimmer — but this is an extreme example. This "countryside" scene is in Neasden, north London, on a traffic roundabout.

Traffic thunders in every direction. The fumes are so thick you can't smell the cut grass. Buildings crowd every horizon. This little haven of countryside may seem improbable in such an intensely urban environment, but it has a serious purpose for those who live here. In the early decades of this century Neasden was a small village surrounded by a rich and varied countryside. Over the years London's spreading urban blight has completely swamped it, and the old community has been sliced up by major roads and their ever-increasing volumes of traffic. The old farmhouse, called The Grange, which dates back to Tudor times, and a patch of land became marooned between these roads, and found themselves on a roundabout.

The Grange, now a listed building, remained derelict for a long time until it was bought by the local council. Now it is a museum that proudly traces Neasden's history, from rural village to urban, multi-cultural community. Ten years ago the London Wildlife Trust designed and built a nature area at the front of the building. Hedges of indigenous species such as hawthorn, blackthorn, dog rose and alder buckthorn were planted to hide the crash barriers. The land was sculpted to create habitats for grassland wildflowers. Trees such as oak, ash, field maple, birch and willow were planted. A pond was created with a wooden viewing platform and this provides the focus for the whole plan. The area is managed by the council with the help of local volunteers.

Both the museum and the nature area are an important resource for local residents and school children. One of the reasons for creating a pond was to try to replace something of the hundreds of farm ponds that have been lost from the area. Without such places, urban kids would only experience wildlife on television. Although there is a fairly large country park and a reservoir famous for its birds not far away, The Grange roundabout is on the doorstep for thousands of people who may not be able to escape that often.

Ten years on, the trees in the little island nature reserve are struggling bravely, though the pollution is terrifying. The council's ranger told me the roundabout has to be tidy to be acceptable and any insurgent wildness is kept strictly under control. And yet . . .

The mallards visit, the newts breed, the wildflowers bloom. Despite the overmanagement, the traffic's deafening row and choking pollution, this odd traffic roundabout has a kind of charm. Neasden is serious about clinging grimly to this relic of its rural past. An idyll it ain't. But then, it never was.

Chess Leonard Barden

THE Hampstead international festival at University College School in March gave several young British players a chance to aim for grandmaster and IM norms and titles. It was the second year that UCS has hosted this event at a time when central London venues for chess are rare. The contrast is acute with 10-20 years ago when Clapham had a chess centre and several colleges gave space for tournaments and coaching for talented juniors.

Title aspirants often do well in tournaments like UCS since established players, who rely on appearance fees but compete for negligible prize money, lack motivation. But this time the old hands proved superior as Neil McDonald won the GM group with a polished 7/9 while the Danish and German top seeds held off the eager British juniors in the IM section. There was also a Fide-rated group where the organiser, Adam Raoof, played and won, a perhaps unique feat. Organisers are normally too crushed by administration to play at all, or if they do then the mental mix of dealing with overprotected passed pawns and overflowing loos soon gets to them.

The new international rule that draw offers must be recorded on score sheets can provide revealing information. In this Hampstead game the black player shared the tournament lead with two rounds to go, so offered peace in a humdrum position after his 12th move. When White refused, Black launched a tactical sequence which swapped minor pieces to leave queens, rooks and equal pawns. The operation succeeded, but the patient died; Black's king proved fatally weak, and Miroslav Houska, one of England's best juniors, drove home a mating attack.

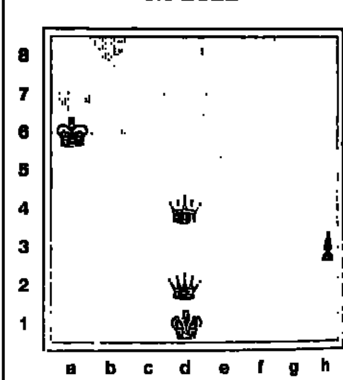
Houska v Rechel

1 d4 Nf6 2 Nf3 g6 3 Bg5 Bg7 4 Nbd2 d6 5 c3 0-0 6 e4 Nc6 7 Be2 e5 8 dxe5 dxe5 9 0-0 h6 10 Bh4 Qe8 11 Qc2 Nh5 12 Rhe1 Be6 13 Nc4 f5 14 exf5 gxf5 15 Ncxe5 Nxe5 16 Nxe5 Bxe5 17 Bxh5 Bxh2+ 18 Kxh2 Qxh5 19 Rxe6 Qxh4+ 20 Kg1 Kg7 21 Rae1 Rf7 22 R1e3 Rh8 23 Rg3+ Kf8 24 Qe2 Qd8 25 Qe5 Rhh7 26 Qc5+ Re7 27 Rf6+ Rhf7 28 Rxf7+ Kxf7 29 Qxf5+ Resigns.

Michael Adams, the England No 1, won his recent £5,000 challenge match 5-1 against Scotland's Jonathan Rowson. The young Scot gained experience but was outclassed. Adams notched up another five Fide rating points to confirm his place in the world top 10 and improve his credibility as a Western challenger to Anatoly Karpov and Garry Kasparov.

Adams, now rated 2715, could have done even better. A 6-0 score would have brought his Fide points equal with Karpov and Vassily Ivanchuk, who share fifth place on 2725. Still, Adams will have another chance to boost his rating when he plays in Madrid this month.

No 2522



Pal Benko v Eric Lobron, Rome 1983. Before Fide introduced seven-hour maximum sessions, adjournments could continue into the small hours. When this position occurred at 4am, the GMs had already played more than 100 moves and White (to play) badly needed to win Black's last pawn so they could stagger off to bed. How did he do it?

No 2521: 1 dxc7 and 2 c8Q or R is obvious, but Black has no legal last move in the diagram. So it has to be Black's turn, and the answer is 1 c5 Ba7 2 c4 Bd4 mate, or 1 c6 Rc5 2 cxd5 Rc8 or 1 cxd6 Rc5 2 dxc5 Be5.

Quick crossword no. 417

Across

1 Pen — found in an envelope (9)
8 Capital — punishment (4)
9 Blunt — irrelevant (9)
10 Count — recount (4)
13 Alarm (5)
15 Large-billed bird (6)
16 Coax (6)
17 Cherry-colour (6)
19 Fractured (6)
20 Way in — for all competitors? (5)
21 Footwear — used at well? (4)
24 Swimming stroke — flying insect (9)
25 Chance (4)
26 Wealth (9)

Down

2 Midday (4)
3 Solitary (4)
4 Turkish ruler (6)
5 Rural (6)
6 Pyrotechnics (9)
7 State of happiness, health or prosperity (9)
11 Accumulated store (9)
12 Dominance (9)
13 Hesitate (5)
14 Convey (5)
18 Overwhelm (6)
19 Inhuman (6)
22 Honest — expression of agreement (4)
23 Alliance (4)

Last week's solution

Bridge Zia Mahmood

I DON'T believe in luck, but at times that fickle lady has a way of reminding you that it is she, not you, who holds all the cards. The other day I was playing rubber bridge with Freddie B, an irrepressible impresario. We'd made a modest contract of two hearts on the first deal of the rubber, and as I picked up my cards for the second my partner said: "Don't forget we have a part score of 60, Zia. We need only 1NT to make game!" My hand was:

♠K432 ♥KQJ65
♦None ♣A842

I opened one heart. Freddie responded two diamonds, and I rebid two hearts. Freddie now leapt to four hearts. Considering that two hearts was game, so that a bid of three hearts by Freddie would be a slam try, it seemed to me that four hearts ought to show a colossal hand. With some partners I might bid a precautionary five hearts, just in case they'd forgotten our part score. But Freddie had just that minute reminded me that we had 60 below, so he clearly knew the situation. Aware that I might be overbidding, I tried six hearts, which ended the auction.

West led a trump, and I faced the problem opposite: Ouch! What was that dummy? Three hearts would have been plenty, and passing two hearts was not out of the question. Oh, well — at least the good thing about terrible contracts is that they are usually quite easy to play. You just close your eyes and hope for the best.

Offering a silent prayer to Lady Luck, I won the opening heart lead with dummy's ace and ruffed a diamond. The ace of clubs and a club ruff were followed by a second diamond ruff, on which the king appeared from West. When I ruffed a second club, the king of that suit also appeared from the West hand. I played a third round of diamonds from dummy, discarding my last club, and West won the trick with the ace. Dummy's diamonds were now good, but if West had a club left to play, I would have to ruff it in my hand and lose a trump trick later. But West played a spade! Winning with the king, I drew trumps before crossing to the ace of spades and cashing dummy's diamonds for my contract.

	North	
	♠ A 8 5	
	♥ A 8 2	
	♦ Q 10 8 6 4 3	
	♣ Q	
West		East
♠ J 9 7 6		♠ Q 10 5
♥ 10 4 3		♥ 9 7
♦ A K 5		♦ J 9 7 2
♣ K 10 5		♣ J 9 7 6 3
	South	
	♠ K 4 3 2	
	♥ K Q J 6 5	
	♦ None	
	♣ A 8 4 2	

It occurred to me as I wrote down 1,430 in the plus column that had West not found the awkward trump lead, I would probably have gone down by trying to ruff three clubs in dummy, then hoping for hearts and spades to divide favourably. While I tried to work out the odds against hearts being 3-2, clubs 5-3 with West having the trebleton, and a defender having exactly ace-king trebleton of diamonds, I heard Freddie's voice: "Lucky I reminded you of the part score!"

Rugby League Silk Cut Challenge Cup final: Sheffield Eagles 17 Wigan Warriors 8

Soaraway Eagles grab Cup glory

Andy Wilson at Wembley

THE Sheffield Eagles produced one of the biggest upsets in this competition's 102-year history to win the first major honour in their 13 years of existence. They led from the fifth minute, but no one, barring their coach John Kear and his players, heroes all, believed they had a chance until at least the 51st minute, when their third try from Darren Turner gave them a 17-2 lead.

Even then, when Wigan hit back with a try in the 56th minute and Andy Farrell converted from the touchline, it could have gone either way: 24 minutes is a long time to tackle Wigan's collection of champions. But somehow Sheffield managed it.

Admittedly Wigan were below par and made too many errors, but to deny full credit to the Eagles would be churlish.

When Nick Pinkney put Sheffield ahead after five minutes, there was no indication of what lay ahead. The try was set up by a good left-wing raid featuring Keith Senior, Matt Crowther and Paul Carr — and it was significant that most of Sheffield's best attacking moments came down the Wigan right, past Gary Connolly at centre — which created the position for Mark Aston to cross-kick and allow the on-rushing Pinkney to outjump the static, and outnumbered, Robinson.

For the rest of the first half the Eagles performed a pretty good impression of that young Dutch lad who held back the floodwaters by keeping his finger in a dyke. Wigan launched raid after raid, but invariably, amazingly, they were all repelled by Sheffield's scrambling defence which forced a series of handling errors, and limited Wigan to a single Farrell penalty.

The second half began with a chorus of "Eagles, Eagles" and in the 51st minute Sheffield scored their third try. It came after a surprised Denis Betts dropped Neil Cowie's pass. Paul Broadbent's thundering charge took the Eagles to within inches of the Wigan line for Turner, who had just been introduced by Kear as an "impact player", to live up to his billing by burrowing under four tackles and planting the ball on the line.

But the 17-2 comfort zone did not last for long. Within five minutes, after a Senior handling error, Wigan had put together a super handling move started by Robbie McCormack, continued by Henry Paul, Betts and Danny Moore, and finished in the corner by Mark Bell. Farrell's conversion struck another significant blow. But Sheffield, clearly exhausted, showed the character to get stuck in again. The Lance Todd Trophy for the man of the match went to Aston, Sheffield's longest-serving player, who was a composed general throughout.

When the hooter sounded the stadium rose to salute Sheffield. For Wigan, and Farrell, there will be plenty more glory days, probably starting with their Super League rematch at the Don Valley Stadium on Saturday — and who would bet against them being crowned Super League champions in the first Grand Final at the end of the season? For Sheffield, there will never be another day like last Sunday.



Sheffield's Broadbent shows off the Cup PHOTO: ADAM BUTLER

Footballer on sex charge found hanged

John Duncan

JUSTIN FASHANU, who shot to fame as a $1.6 million striker and became Britain's only openly gay footballer, was found hanged in an east London lock-up garage after police in the United States charged him with sexually assaulting a 17-year-old boy.

Fashanu, aged 37, fled to England from Maryland last week after a student claimed he had woken up to find the former footballer performing a sexual act on him.

The footballer was charged with second-degree sexual assault, which carries a maximum 20-year prison sentence, and first- and second-degree common assault. He was interviewed voluntarily on March 25, but was not taken into custody. When forensic experts arrived on April 3 with a warrant to gather evidence at the apartment they found his belongings had gone.

Fashanu had seemed set for a bright career when he was a young striker with Norwich City in 1978. His career disintegrated after he joined Nottingham Forest for $1.6 million in 1981 and rumours circulated about his sexuality.

After Fashanu left Nottingham Forest, he made a handful of appearances for several clubs before a serious injury ended his playing career.

Boxing

Star critical after defeat

SPENCER OLIVER, one of the brightest young hopes of British boxing, was on a life support machine in a London hospital on Tuesday after collapsing at the end of a title defence, *writes John Duncan.*

The 22-year-old bantamweight, making the third defence of his European crown, is the latest to suffer serious injuries in the ring in recent years, and his youth and apparent fitness will inevitably strengthen the hand of those who say boxing is too dangerous and should be banned.

The boxer remained in a coma, after a three-hour operation to have a blood clot removed from his brain. He will remain on a ventilator for at least a week while doctors assess the long-term damage from the blow in the 10th round of his fight, when he fell, recovered and then collapsed into the arms of the referee Alfred Azaro. It was a bad moment for Mr Azaro too — he was the referee of the Gerald McClellan/Nigel Benn fight in February 1995 that left McClellan blind and deaf. That incident forced a total rethink of medical facilities at boxing events.

Oliver's opponent, the Ukrainian Sergei Devakov, is not regarded as a heavy puncher, and though Oliver had taken hard blows to the head in the first and sixth rounds, the fight was not the sort of gruelling, even contest which experts have identified as the most dangerous for this sort of injury.

Sports Diary Shiv Sharma

Olympic medallist denies drugs charges

IRELAND'S Michelle Smith, who won four medals, three gold and a bronze, for swimming at the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta and found herself the subject of a whispering campaign about drug use, is at the centre of a new doping row. She failed an out-of-competition test last January, the result of which was confirmed by Fina, the sport's world governing body, last week.

"Unequivocal signs of adulteration were found and the result of the analysis was also compatible with physical manipulation," said a statement from the Fina headquarters in Lausanne.

But at a Dublin press conference later Smith denied any wrong-doing. She said: "I am innocent of these charges. I am appalled at the way they have been leaked into the public domain, and I intend fully defending them. I hope that my good name and reputation and the good name and reputation of Ireland will be intact at the end of this."



Smith: 'I am innocent'

The 28-year-old has been the victim of persistent sniping about the rapid rise she made in the sport at a late age since 1992 when she met her husband-to-be, Erik De Bruin, a Dutch discus thrower who was once banned for four years for a drugs offence. Analysis, page 13

SURREY launched the defence of their Benson & Hedges Cup with convincing wins over Hampshire and Gloucestershire. In the opening encounter, they scored 267-8 against Hampshire and then bowled out the opposition for 215. Adam Hollioake's team then beat Gloucestershire by seven wickets to reach the top of Group C.

Warwickshire recorded their first win over Lancashire for 10 years in the competition by making 234 off their 50 overs at Old Trafford and then dismissing the home side for 185 in Group A. Warwickshire's next victory was over Northamptonshire, whom they beat by 71 runs after scoring 260-9.

In Group B, Yorkshire defeated Worcestershire by five wickets in the opening game and then disposed of Scotland by three wickets to take the top spot. Glamorgan, whose game against Essex was abandoned because of rain, earning both sides a point each, scored 230-9 against Ireland and then restricted them to half that total to head Group D.

ALEC STEWART was named as England's new cricket captain for the upcoming Test series against Sri Lanka and South Africa. His Surrey team-mate Adam Hollioake was given charge of the one-day series against South Africa.

JOHN HIGGINS of Scotland won the $365,000 World Snooker Championship in Sheffield after defeating last year's winner, Ireland's Ken Doherty, 18-12. His win pushed him to the top of snooker's world rankings, ending Stephen Hendry's eight-year tenure.

AFTER the tickets fiasco, the World Cup beginning in France next month is facing another threat from an unusual source — the country's truck drivers. They have brought France to a standstill twice in the past two years and have now given a warning that they will cause chaos during the tournament if their pay demands are not met. "A strike is the only way to make employers listen," a union official said. "Drivers will be meeting on May 16 to decide what steps to take."

DENNIS BERGKAMP has been named Footballer of the Year, the fourth successive overseas player to receive the award. Arsenal's Dutch striker follows Jurgen Klinsmann, Eric Cantona and Gianfranco Zola in winning the coveted trophy, voted for by the Football Writers' Association. For those looking for omens, Bergkamp is the first player of the London club to win the award since Frank McLintock, captain of the Double-winning side of 1970-71.

Championship winners, page 36

LOCAL hero Alex Criville held off a charging Michael Doohan to win motorcycling's 500cc Spanish Grand Prix at Jerez. Criville, who also won his home race last year, slipped past the Australian 10 laps from the end, to the delight of the 150,000 crowd.

Football results

FA CARLING PREMIERSHIP: Arsenal 4, Everton 0; Bolton 5, Crystal Palace 2; Coventry 2, Blackburn 0; Leicester 1, Barnsley 0; Liverpool 5, West Ham 0; Manchester Utd 3, Leeds Utd 0; Newcastle 3, Chelsea 1; Sheff Wed 1, Aston Villa 3; Southampton 0, Derby 2; Wimbledon 2, Tottenham 6
Leading positions: 1, Arsenal (played 36, points 78); 2, Manchester Utd (37-74); 3, Liverpool (36-62).

NATIONWIDE LEAGUE:
Division One: Birminghm 0, Charlton 0; Bradford 1, Portsmouth 3; Huddersfld 0, Port Vale 4; Ipswich 3, Crewe 2; Middlesbro 4, Oxford Utd 1; QPR 0, Bury 1; Reading 0, Norwich 1; Stockport 1, Sheff Utd 0; Stoke 2, Man City 5; Swindon 1, Sunderland 2; Tranmere 2, Wolverhampton 1; West Brom 1, Nottm Forest 1.
Final positions: 1, Nottm Forest (46-94); 2, Middlesboro (46-91); 3, Sunderland (46-90).

Division Two: Bristol R 2, Brentford 1; Burnley 2, Plymouth 1; Chesterfld 1, Blackpool 1; Fulham 1, Watford 2; Gillingham 0, Wigan 0; Grimsby 0, Oldham 2; Luton 3, Carlisle 2; Millwall 1, Bournemth 2; Preston 2, Bristol City 1; Southend 1, Wrexham 3; Walsall 0, Wycombe 1; York 0, Northmptn 0.
Final positions 1, Watford (46-88); 2, Bristol City (46-85); 3, Grimsby (46-72).

Division Three: Cardiff 0, Darlington 0; Chester 1, Scarboro 1; Doncaster 0, Colchester 1; Exeter 1, Macclesfld 3; Hull 1, Cambridge 0; Orient 2, Torquay 1; Lincoln 2, Brighton 1; Mansfield 1, Swansea 0; Notts Co 5, Rotherham 2; Peterboro 0, Hartlepool 0; Rochdale 2, Barnet 1; Shrewsbry 0, Sc'thorpe 2.
Final positions: 1, Notts Co (46-99); 2, Macclesfield (46-82); 3, Lincoln City (46-75).

BELL'S SCOTTISH LEAGUE:
Premier Division: Aberdeen 2, Hearts 2; Dunfmline 1, Celtic 1; Hibernian 1, Dundee U 2; Rangers 0, Kilmarnk 1; St Johnstn 3, Motherwell 2.
Leading positions 1, Celtic (35-71); 2, Rangers (35-69); 3 Hearts (35-64).

First Division: Airdrie 1, Raith 0; Ayr 1, Falkirk 3; Dundee 0, Partick 3; Hamilton 0, Morton 3; Stirling A 0, St Mirren 1.
Leading positions: 1, Dundee (36-70); 2, Falkirk (35-65); 3, Raith (35-57).

Second Division: Clydebank 1, Queen Sth 1; Forfar 0, Clyde 1; Stenhsmr 2, East Fife 3; Stranraer 2, Livingston 0; Invrnss CT 2, Brechin 1.
Leading positions: 1, Livingston (35-59); 2, Stranraer (35-58); 3, Clydebank (35-57).

Third Division: Berwick 5, Albion 2; Cowdnbth 1, Alloa 3; E. Stirling 1, Arbroath 1; Montrose 2, Dumbarton 1; Queens Pk 0, Ross Co 4.
Leading positions: 1, Alloa (35-73); 2, Arbroath (35-67); 3, Ross Co (35-64).